

Landscaping Postcoloniality

The Dissemination of Cameroon Anglophone Literature



Joyce B. Ashuntantang

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Dedication

For my teachers, past and present; my learning never ends...

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Preface

The idea for this book started taking shape in my mind when I was studying for a Masters in Librarianship at the University college of Wales, Aberystwyth. It is during this time that I became aware that Anglophone Cameroon was largely undocumented. Each time I looked up Cameroon in reference sources it was identified as a French speaking Country. Anglophone African countries were Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Kenya etc. Anglophone Cameroon was lost/missing in “postcolonial” Africa. When it came to literary sources the same pattern occurred. When Albert Gerard was editing *European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Anglophone Cameroon was omitted since it was not an independent political entity. In a last ditch effort to save the situation, Stephen Arnold wrote an introductory account of Anglophone Cameroon literature titled “Emergent English Writing in Cameroon” and it was included in the collection as an appendix to Nigerian Literature! In the same vein, Richard Bjornson’s seminal work on Cameroon, *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience* barely makes mention of writers from Anglophone Cameroon. Although the book is 528 pages and Bjornson’s research references are up to 1988, Bjornson only devotes less than twenty pages to Anglophone Cameroon Literature as a whole.

The reasons for this apparent oversight and neglect are three fold. First, peculiar historical circumstances have rendered Anglophone Cameroon invisible in the continent of Africa. Second, the minority position of Anglophone Cameroon in the nation state called “Republic of Cameroon” has greatly limited the visibility of Anglophone Cameroon writers. This limited visibility is further compounded by Anglophone Cameroon’s geographical position, wedged between the populous/literary giant Nigeria and majority Francophone Cameroon. Thirdly, the dissemination patterns for African literature have been such that only books published by western multi-national companies are assured wider dissemination. Hence these privileged books have formed the canon and are prescribed and critiqued year in year out in schools and colleges world wide. This has made it very difficult for writers who publish locally on the continent to be read out side their immediate environment. Nevertheless, in response to the unique

situation of Anglophone Cameroon, Chinua Achebe holds that” ...That feeling of being the little, almost forgotten member, tucked away there, is a huge story. The mistake many people make is to think that a successful story is successful because it is big, or because it is somebody else’s story that has worked” (interview with author, “Summit” 14).

Indeed, in spite of the difficulties in publishing and disseminating their works, Anglophone Cameroon writers have been telling their story (ies) in print since 1959. Consequently this text not only seeks to bring these stories to a wider audience but to also present the Anglophone Cameroon literary landscape as a context or background for these stories.

Chapter One

Reversing Babel¹: English in Anglophone Cameroon

Anglophone Cameroon literature is written primarily in English, although there are over ninety ethnic languages in the region. Just like the literature, the identity of individuals in this region has crystallized around English because of their minority status within a dominantly Francophone Cameroon.

On the map of Africa, Cameroon is a triangular country situated on the west coast. It is bordered by Chad on the north, Nigeria on the west, Central African Republic to the east, and Gabon and Congo to the south. On the continent, it is the only country with exoglossic bilingualism: French and English are the official languages, although there are over 240 indigenous languages in the entire nation. As a result, Cameroon is made up of two distinct linguistic regions: the French region, which covers four-fifths of the territory, and the English-speaking region, which covers the rest. The country is divided into ten administrative provinces: Center, North, Far North, East, South, Littoral, West, Adamawa, North West, and South West. According to the 2007 CIA World factbook there are 18,060,382 people in Cameroon. English-speaking Cameroonians make up 20 percent of this number and geographically occupy the North West and South West provinces. The English-speaking region has had different names. It was referred to as Southern Cameroons during the British Mandate and Trusteeship period, 1919-1961; West Cameroon during the Federal period, 1961-1972; and now, in the present “Republic of Cameroon”, it is often referred to as “Anglophone Cameroon.” In a way these changing appellations reflect the changing status of English in the region. Although there is a relative paucity of scholarship on Anglophone Cameroon, a number of scholars (Loreto Todd 1982; Chumbow 1980; Simo Bobda 1994; Han-Georg Wolf 1997, 2000; Krieger 1991, Koenig et al. 1983) have examined English in Cameroon. For the most part, their analysis have dwelt on the varieties of English spoken in Cameroon, language use, the effect of bilingualism, and the sociological influences on English phonology in the country. This chapter, however, sets out to show the historical and social place of English in Cameroon and how it has come to be a marker of identity for Anglophone Cameroon.

Based on this identity, there is a drive for Anglophones to produce and disseminate literature in English. Such a move obviously goes against the grain of the continuing debate among African writers—that in order for African literature to thrive, it needs to be produced in indigenous languages. In his book *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiongo, the chief proponent for African languages, holds that African writers should write in African languages, thereby giving something back to the African languages instead of stealing from them to enhance the English language. Ngũgĩ contends that African writers writing in European languages are continuing the process of mental colonization wrought by imperialism, which is why Ngũgĩ himself has not written his fiction or essays in English since 1986.

To support the claim of African languages, participants at a conference titled “Against all Odds: African Languages and Literatures in the 21st century” held in Eritrea on 7-11 January 2000, drew up the Asmara declaration. Among other things, the declaration holds that “African languages must take on the duty, responsibility and the challenges of speaking for the continent” (Asmara Declaration), and calls on the use of translation to open up a dialogue among African languages. The conference participants hoped that the declaration would spur African writers to make the switch from European languages to African languages in their writings. Yet in Anglophone Cameroon there is a need to uphold the English language, and Anglophones talk of a dire need for the increase of literature in that language. In order to understand the quest for the production and visibility for Cameroon literature in English, one needs to understand how English became implanted in Cameroon and what it has come to connote in present times.

English Language in Cameroon 1800-1919

British traders introduced English to Cameroon about 1800, and the language was quickly pidginized by the natives along the coast (Delancey 8). Between 1850 to 1884 the British controlled the coastal regions of Cameroon, and the coastal chiefs actually requested the British government to annex the country formally (Todd 6). However, the formal teaching of English through the establishment of a school is credited to Joseph Merrick, a Jamaican

Baptist missionary, who opened a pioneer mission station in Bimbia in 1844. Shortly after this Alfred Saker established another station in Victoria. These missionary stations began to convert Cameroonians to Christianity and began colonial education in English. By 1884 the Baptists had established twenty-four mission stations, each with a vernacular school, and had in addition five English medium schools where the main aim was to teach standard British English and these were highly regarded by Cameroonians (Todd 10). However, the most impressive educational work carried out by the missionaries at this stage was in vernacular. Merrick wrote and printed several books in Isubu language, Alfred Saker translated *The New Testament* into Duala, and Fuller translated *The Pilgrim's Progress*, also into Duala. Isubu and Duala were languages spoken by indigenes where the mission stations were located.

Although Germans took over Cameroon in 1884 after the Berlin Conference, English did not disappear. English was frequently used by Cameroonians and Germans, especially on the huge, German-built plantations that drew their labor force from different ethnic groups. However, as Germany established its supremacy over Cameroon, the English Baptists left in 1886; to their credit, they handed over eleven schools, with a total enrollment of 368 pupils, to a German-speaking missionary society based in Switzerland (qtd. in Gwei 25). By 1910 the German government, which had hitherto left education in the hands of the Christian missions, grew stricter on educational policies. They “made school attendance compulsory, made German the medium of instruction and made being a school ‘drop out’ a punishable offense” (Chiabi 139). Nevertheless, English remained the language of court records in Victoria, as well records of the Baptist church in both Douala and Victoria. Despite the fact that German trade became paramount, British firms continued to operate using English and Pidgin (Vernon-Jackson 12).

The growth of English in Cameroon again received a boost after World War I when, as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, Cameroon became a mandated territory of France and Britain in 1919. France acquired four-fifths of the general territory and ruled it as an autonomous French colony, while one-fifth went to Britain and was governed as an integral part of Nigeria, which was then a British colony. British Cameroon was divided into Northern and Southern Cameroons. Northern Cameroon was divided

administratively among the three Northern Nigerian provinces of Adamawa, Benue, and Bornu, and Southern Cameroons was governed as a single province of Nigeria. In this situation, Southern Cameroons became an appendage of Nigeria.

While the French developed a closely controlled educational system in their part of the country and French became the official language, the British zone was virtually abandoned as far as government action toward education was concerned. Even political officers of the British Army who had been assigned local responsibility had to leave as part of the British withdrawal of military personnel after the war (Vernon-Jackson 16). Consequently, after the war, it was the missionaries who again championed the course of education in order to spread Christianity. The Catholics, led by the Mill Hill fathers, opened a senior primary school in Sasse in 1923. Although the Presbyterians and Baptists also opened schools, the Catholic mission was quite aggressive in its education policy and opened schools in very remote areas. When the British returned, they continued the policy established by the missionary schools but sought to bring only a minimum of literacy to Africans for the purpose of spreading religion and education. In this regard, the British favored schools with indigenous languages as the medium of instruction. According to Todd,

in Cameroon as in Nigeria, their (British) recommended education policy was to encourage widespread primary education, using the language of the village, town or region as the medium of education in years 1-4, and English in years 5-8 (Todd 10).

Despite the use of indigenous languages in the first four years of elementary school, some form of English was still taught in these classes. Todd identifies three possible reasons why. To begin with, English enjoyed a position of prestige even with the local teacher. Furthermore, most parents could not afford to sponsor their children up to year eight and wanted them to gain some English language skills that could guarantee some form of employment by year four. And finally, in a heavily multilingual country like Cameroon, it was often difficult to find teachers who could speak the language of a village or region (Todd 10). Thus vernacular education faced a decline. As Todd reports:

In 1927, for example, there were 299 vernacular schools teaching 7,155 children, but by 1959 the number of vernacular schools had fallen to 6, and the number of children being educated in this way to 191. Or, to put the statistic another way, by 1959 99% of all children receiving primary education were being taught through the medium of English (10).

However, the death knell for vernacular education came from the newly established Southern Cameroons government. A ministerial decree signed in Buea on 27 September 1958 stated that “English is to be the medium of instruction in primary schools and all the textbooks used are to be in English” (qtd. in Todd 11). With the focus of education now placed on instruction in English, the training of teachers became a government priority and the government school, which had been founded in 1927, was elevated to an Elementary Teacher Training college (ETTC) and relocated to Kake. The Catholic and Basel Missions followed suit by opening teacher-training colleges in Nyassoso and Njinikom, respectively. In order to fill the visible gap in female education, the Catholics opened a teacher training college for women, the St. Francis teacher training college at Fiango in Kumba. Nevertheless, in the 1920s the content of education left much to be desired since the goal of the missionaries as well as the colonial government was to “provide basic education which produced assistants without posing threats to educators” (Chiabi 138).

The lack of educational opportunities was acute in Southern Cameroon, where during the first seventeen years of British rule there were no secondary schools. Many English-speaking Cameroonian students who wanted to pursue secondary education traveled to Nigeria. Here the medium of instruction was English, but they faced an enrollment limit. This situation changed in 1939 when the British reluctantly approved the establishment of a Catholic secondary school at Sasse. Sasse remained the only secondary school in Cameroon until 1948 when the Basel mission opened another boys’ secondary school in Bali. The Catholics, filling an obvious gap in female education, obtained permission to open a secondary school for girls, Queen of the Rosary College, Okoyong in 1955, but the school effectively started on May 4th 1956. In these mission schools English was the medium of instruction, since the value had become such that the local

population questioned the teaching of vernacular. The curriculum in these schools included general education as well as subjects with practical value, such as shorthand and bookkeeping, needed by government departments. Students had to write the British Junior Cambridge Exam and then the Senior Cambridge exam. With the introduction of the Cambridge certificates, the status of English became undisputed because of the economic benefits that resulted from its mastery. Furthermore, secondary education also prepared students for postsecondary schools in Nigeria, namely, Yaba Higher College and the University of Ibadan which opened in 1934, and 1943 respectively.

Hans-Georg Wolf contends that the educational efforts of the missions need not blind one to the fact that British neglect of education in West Cameroon had an overall negative effect, which provoked criticism from the United Nations on a number of occasions (“English” 93). The following figures show the state of education in English in 1954.

Table 1: Education in West Cameroon in 1954

	No. Institutions	No. Pupils
Primary	319	37,307
Teacher Training Centers	4	290
Secondary Schools	2	426
Technical schools	1	138

(Source: Chiabi, 149)

The poor state of education was also blamed on the lack of alternative educational resources. Mbassi-Manga emphasizes this point when he notes that:

...the ancillary education services too were inadequate and even nonexistent in many places. Newspapers were printed in English but they were no children’s papers...There were no cinemas in the country until 1949 and then only in Victoria...the radio was introduced latterly, but it was for many a “music box” and not an educational tool (55).

Wolf concludes that “as a consequence of the disastrous educational policy in Southern Cameroons, the extent of illiteracy

was between 80 and 90%” (96); this situation encouraged the spread of Pidgin English instead of Standard British English.

In comparison, Vernon-Jackson points out that, educational resources in French Cameroon were supported by both government and missionary structures, which included further training in France. The effort in schools was augmented by the presence of a relatively high number of French émigrés, printing presses for local French publications, and low tolerance for vernacular in schools, all of which encouraged the effective learning of French (17). This was in line with the French policy of assimilation, which intended to turn colonial subjects into French men and women. One can still see a significant impact of this limited access to Standard English in Anglophone towns where the rate of literacy in Standard English is lower than the rate of literacy in French in Francophone towns. The following tables exemplify this point:

Table 2a: Distribution of French Speakers in Francophone towns.

Town	% Male French Speakers	% Female French Speakers
Douala	96%	94%
Edea	94%	95%
Nkongsamba	95%	96%
Bafoussam	94	92
Foumban	90	91
Bafang	97	92
Dschang	91	92
Yaounde	92	93
Bafia	91	93
Ebolowa	99	95
Sangmelima	98	95
Mbanjock	98	93
Kribi	98	97
Garoua	71	64
Kaele	84	87
Bertoua	88	80

(Source: Koenig, Chia, and Poveyl 107-109)

Table 2b: Distribution of English speakers in Anglophone towns.

Town	% Male SE Speakers	% Female SE Speakers
Kumba	65	53
Victoria	71	74
Buea	70	74
Mamfe	66	75
Bamenda	85	83
Kumbo	69	63

These tables indicate that for most Francophones French is the common language, while for most Anglophones Standard English is not. This is understandable since Anglophones use pidgin widely as a lingua franca. This pattern of language use can thus be traced back to the beginnings of Western education practices in both territories.

In the Mix: English in a Federated and United Cameroon

Nigeria and French Cameroon gained independence in 1960. Southern Cameroons, which had gained self-government in 1954, remained wedged between them, awaiting its fate. The United Nations decided to organize a plebiscite in Southern Cameroons. The question was asked whether Southern Cameroons wanted to join Nigeria or The Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons was not given the third option of becoming independent. The plebiscite took place on 11 February 1961, and Southern Cameroons voted to join French Cameroon in a federation. The two regions formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons adopted the name West Cameroon, while French Cameroon became known as East Cameroon. The reasons for this vote can be found in the way the British administered Southern Cameroons as a sort of province within Nigeria. Afraid of total domination by Nigerians, Southern Cameroons, in a move which is now heavily regretted, disregarded linguistic ties and chose a relatively unknown Eastern Cameroon (see V. Amaazee).

Although the federation resulted in heavy centralization of government administration, West Cameroon retained English as the official language and East Cameroon retained French. Immediately, structures were put in place to harmonize the two

educational systems, with the aim of achieving bilingualism in English and French. As part of this process, secondary education was federalized in 1962, thereby making English and French subjects in East and West Cameroon secondary schools, respectively.

As a former minister of national education put it, “Cameroon must become the crucible where, fed by the fire of our faith, the eminent physical, intellectual and moral values of our races, nourished on the Anglo-Saxon and French cultures, will dissolve and merge” (qtd. in Vernon-Jackson 23). The government was therefore bent on making Cameroon a bilingual state by merging the two colonial cultures. Bernard Fonlon, an Anglophone intellectual and one of the key players during the early years of independence, made a case for early bilingualism, urging that the compulsory teaching of both French and English must begin in primary schools (“A Case”). In order to harmonize the two systems of education, a purely bilingual secondary school was opened in 1963 in Man O’ War Bay as an experiment. In 1965 a second was opened in Yaounde attached to the UNESCO-sponsored Ecole Normal Supérieure. The bilingual school in Man O’ War Bay, located in West Cameroon, was to serve as a model. The manner in which the school operated is worth noting:

Each year, an equal number of choice students from each Federal State is admitted into the school. In the first, second and third forms, they are taught in separate classes; the Francophones receive intensive courses in English, the Anglophones in French, and do the rest of the subjects in their respective first language. At the beginning of the fourth form [...] the pioneering group was re-arranged into two, graded, bilingual classes in which Francophones and Anglophones sit side by side and receive the same lessons; and in addition to the continued effort, some subjects are taught in French, others in English...To test this experiment, it is intended that this pioneering group should take the *Brevet* (a French secondary school examination taken at the fourth form) and the GCE Ordinary level, at the end of the fifth form. Thereafter, the students can prepare for the baccalauréat, or the G.C.E. Advanced Level, or both, as they choose (qtd. in Fonlon “The Language Problem”, 38)

This would have been a perfect way to harmonize the two systems and create effective bilingual speakers in French and English. Unfortunately, this model of bilingual education was not available to most students. Hence the fact remained: English was used in West Cameroon schools and French in East Cameroon schools.

In West Cameroon, the missions continued their English education agenda as they tried to outdo each other in opening more secondary schools. In 1962 the Baptists opened a girls' secondary school in Victoria, which was later named after Alfred Saker. The following year the Basel mission opened the Basel Mission College, a secondary school for boys that admitted girls in 1964, making it the first coeducational school in Cameroon. It was later renamed The Presbyterian Secondary School. Although the government slowly opened some schools, the Christian missions continued to lead in providing education, as the following figures show:

Table 3: Percentage of mission schools in West Cameroon in 1970.

Type of Schools	Mission	Gov't	Other	% mission
Primary schools	691	1	69	90%
Secondary schools	16	3	0	84%
Primary teacher				
Training	11	1	0	92%
Commercial schools	0	0	5	--
Technical schools	0	1	3	--

(Source: Haupt 8)

The nationalism that swept across Africa leading to the independence of most African nations did not touch the issue of language, so English education continued unabated. As Lizaribar Buxo points out,

this attests to the serious aftereffects of acculturation, so that colonial models were retained partly because of their symbolic status. In this manner, nationalism and colonial educational models co-exist in absolute coherence for it is a question of symbols of power. In essence control is transferred from the colonial power to the new leaders and English (or any other

European language) remains the undisputed medium of authority (11).

It is, however, logical to posit that the reason English, or any European language for that matter, remained as an official language after colonization was because of a genuine problem created by colonialism. The so-called nations were nothing but entities made up of disparate ethnic groups that spoke different indigenous languages. As Goke Parfiola notes, "Evidently the English language as a non-indigenous common tongue at least among the educated elite, provided a basis for the continuation and possible consolidation of this fragile unity" (Goke Parfiola 64).

In addition, the difficulty of choosing one indigenous language over another presented itself. In West Cameroon, Mungaka and Duala could have easily been adopted as national languages since they had been a medium of instruction in most parts of southern Cameroon until 1958, but this would have brought tension among other ethnic groups that had already showed resentment over studying Mungaka and Duala. Hence the choice of English was nearly a forgone conclusion. Nevertheless, Koenig contends that using English and French as official languages has not abated any tensions in the case of Cameroon. She holds that "contrary to the situation at independence and reunification, ethnic tensions have tended to increase" (114).

Despite the attainment of independence, the system of education in West Cameroon was still largely tied to Britain and remains relatively so even today. Primary school lasted seven years. At the end of the seven years, pupils took the government-sponsored First School Leaving Exam to determine their success at that level. Those wishing to continue to secondary-level education had to take the Government Common Entrance Examination to enter academic or technical secondary schools, or other primary teaching establishments. Secondary education consisted of two cycles. The first cycle was a five-year course ending with the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations at ordinary level, while students in technical schools sat for the City and Guilds of London Institute certificates. The few who were able to pursue the second cycle of secondary education entered the Cameroon College of Arts and Technology, which offered a two-year course leading to the GCE advanced-

level examinations. On obtaining the desired advanced levels, students had two options: enrolling in the Federal University, founded in 1963 and located in the national capital of Yaounde situated in East Cameroon, or entering into the Ecole Normale Supérieure Annex (Secondary Teacher Training College) located in West Cameroon.

Thus, with the growth of primary and secondary education institutions, the number of English speakers who could read and write grew but the situation left much to be desired. As Amin remarks, "Education is a worthwhile investment, but in West Cameroon, everything was lacking: teachers, books, teaching aids classrooms and other necessary facilities" (59). Therefore West Cameroon had problems finding trained personnel to teach English, more so for bilingual education. The British not only left West Cameroon politically, they abandoned their educational activities as well. This abandonment almost bordered on irresponsibility when one notes the case of the only technical school cited by Amin. This government trade center was staffed mainly by British expatriates, so when they left the school was forced to close its doors. With education mostly in mission hands, enrollment was poor, since most parents could not afford the required tuition (Amin, 60).

After the British left, American Peace Corps volunteers came to salvage West Cameroon's education. They participated in opening new secondary and teacher training schools. In fact, the Peace Corps volunteers formed the largest number of graduate teachers in West Cameroon's secondary schools. They were also involved in teaching English in schools and teaching civil servants in East Cameroon (Amin 113).

As a result, not much was achieved in terms of bilingualism. Even the Federal University, which was intended to be a flagship of bilingualism when it was founded in 1963, proved ineffective. The university was bilingual to the point that "the lecturer had a choice between English and French as a medium of instruction (whichever suits him best) whereas the student has no choice but to understand lectures, write (and 'present' oral) examinations in either language" (Chumbow 292). With more French-speaking lecturers teaching at the university, it was and continues to be essentially French. This, of course, affected the graduation rate of English-speaking students as compared to their Francophone

counterparts. Thus despite the rhetoric on bilingualism, the Federal period did not lead to a harmonization of the two systems.

On 20 May 1972, in what is now regarded as a controversial referendum, the two federated states of East and West Cameroon merged to become the United Republic of Cameroon. With the unitary state came a new dose of bilingualism. Constitutionally, the two official languages, English and French, could be used indiscriminately anywhere in Cameroon. In principle, this is still the case today. To bolster this bilingualism, English and French were to be introduced in primary schools. According to Ze Amvela, the pioneer commission on the introduction of English in Francophone primary schools was held in 1973. It was decided that English would be taught as a subject in the last three classes of the Francophone primary school. A seminar held on bilingualism in Yaounde in 1975 set the primary school course objectives:

To give the pupil the type of sound basic knowledge of practical English which he will need in everyday life after he leaves school (e.g., contacts with Anglophone Cameroonians, radio and television programmes in English, English Language News papers and books) [...] to provide a sound linguistic basis for further studies (Ze Amvela 20).

In addition to this move in primary schools, the government linguistic centers created during the Federal period increased in number. These centers carried out English and French language classes, particularly for civil servants although their doors were open to the general public as well. These were, in effect, classes for adult language learners, although recently these linguistic centers have started to offer classes for young people during the long vacation. It suffices to note here that from teaching in the Yaounde linguistic Center in the early 1990s, I discovered that most adults and young people who come to learn English do not intend to use it in Cameroon. English is acquired as a means of taking advantage of opportunities abroad, since English is a world language. On the contrary, the Anglophones who enroll in the center to learn French intend to use it in Cameroon to access the French-dominated higher education institutions and government administrative positions.

Still in line with its bilingual policy, the government continued to open many bilingual secondary schools across the country,

although these schools hardly followed the Man O' War Bay model. In effect, these schools were not bilingual as such, but were two separate schools—one following an English curriculum and the other French, both on the same campus. Furthermore, in higher education the government created a program dubbed “bilingual training,” or “Formation Bilingue,” in the university and several professional schools (Les grandes écoles) attached to it, such as L' Ecole Normale Supérieure, (Post Graduate Teacher's College) L'Ecole Polytechnique, (School of Engineering) and L'Ecole National d'Administration et de magistrature (National School of Administration and Magistracy).

As part of the bilingual training program, English speaking students in the university were expected to take a French course throughout their university program, and French-speaking students were also to have English as part of their curriculum. The only students exempt from this were those studying toward a degree in French and English bilingual studies. Unfortunately, this bilingual training was largely ineffective. From my experience as a student in the University of Yaounde, the bilingual training classes lumped together students with varying degrees of proficiency. Thus the student who had lived mainly in Francophone towns and spoke French very well or had passed French at the GCE “A” Level sat in the same class with students who had failed French in secondary school and had never lived in a Francophone town. The same held true for Francophones studying English. Students who were proficient in the language taught in the bilingual class found it boring, and the less proficient easily lost interest; students participated in the bilingual training program simply to fulfill a university requirement.

Theoretically, then, every Cameroonian who graduates at least from secondary school, not to mention university, is expected to be able to read and write in French and English. Unfortunately this has not been the case, as can be seen from the most organized investigation of Cameroon language use carried out between 1975-1978 and published in 1983 as *A Sociolinguistic Profile of Urban Centers in Cameroon* by Koenig, Chia, and Povey. A team of thirty researchers surveyed 4,850 households in all but one of the largest cities and towns. This represented 28.5 percent of the urban population, exactly where the effect of bilingualism from schools and the workforce is intended to be felt. But there was little French

and English bilingualism fifteen years after the implementation of the bilingual policy. Another survey, based on 12,712 school-age children, was carried out. Eighty-three percent of these children were living in Francophone Cameroon and 17 percent were living in Anglophone Cameroon. The survey revealed that 87 percent of those in Francophone Cameroon spoke French, and 72 percent of those in Anglophone Cameroon spoke English. Statistically, French speech in Anglophone areas or English speech in French areas is so low as to be statistically insignificant (Koenig 94-111). Though these statistics are more than twenty years old, recent studies on Cameroon (Wolf 2001; Kreiger 1991) have all confirmed that total bilingualism of individuals in English and French remains a utopian ideal in Cameroon. Consequently, language use in Cameroon still follows strictly historical borderlines, where English is used predominantly in Anglophone Cameroon and French in Francophone areas, although in general the French language has a remarkable edge.

With the dominance of French, the status of English as an official language in Cameroon, supposedly on the same footing with French, is constantly threatened by the minority status of its speakers. Bernard Fonlon predicted this in his famous essay “Will we Make or Mar?” Fonlon emphatically argued that

unless the East Cameroon francophone leader in whose hands our cultural initiative lies is prepared to share this authority with his brother from West of the Mungo (Anglophone), unless he is prepared to make the giant effort necessary to break loose from the strait jacket of his French education, unless he will show proof of his intellectual probity and admit candidly that there are things in the Anglo-Saxon way of life that can do his country good, there is little chance of survival, neither for English, nor even for African values in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. With African Culture moribund, with John Bullism weak and in danger of being smothered, we will all be French in two generations or three! (qtd. in Arnold “Preface” 498)

This domination of French can be seen from the constitution. The 1972 constitution stipulated that English and French were to be the official languages of Cameroon, but in case of dispute the French version was authentic (Kofele-Kale “Ethnicity, regionalism,

and political power” 67). Although such offensive pronouncements were eventually removed, the de facto position of English has not changed significantly. The former president of Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo and the present president Paul Biya, have both been Francophones. It is common knowledge in Cameroon that during Ahidjo’s twenty-two years of power, he never spoke in English apart from the ceremonial “I do so swear” each time his term of office was renewed. Paul Biya, who just celebrated twenty-eight years in office, has rarely spoken English. Whenever Biya addresses the nation it is done in French, and a journalist provides an English translation. For some years now, Peter Essoka, a veteran Anglophone journalist, has read the English translation.

Furthermore, parliamentary debates are for the most part carried out in French and most government documents are written in French; a translation can be done later in English. Road signs and public signs even in Anglophone Cameroon are boldly written in French; if it exists, an English translation follows underneath in smaller letters. In addition, school certificates are written primarily in French; when they have English translations they are usually heavily flawed. As already noted, the University of Yaounde (now University of Yaounde I and II), which was created to be a model bilingual institution, is a veritable French institution. Since the teachers in this institution are permitted to teach in the language of their choice and most of them are French speaking, the instruction is carried out largely in French, to the disadvantage of Anglophone students. With regard to the official equality of English and French in the University of Yaounde, Wolf rightly argues that “true linguistic equality has never been realized, and the situation at the university may indeed stand for the status of English and French in Cameroon as a whole” (182). In 1967 Vernon-Jackson predicted that

with reference to the future of French and English in Cameroon [...] It does seem however likely that there is less tangible incentive for French-speaking Cameroonians to speak English than there is for English-speaking West Cameroonians to speak French...Unless successful widespread teaching of English is carried out in East Cameroon schools, and unless an incentive is provided to maintain and expand English fluency achieved, it is that the West rather than East Cameroon will be more affected by the present bilingual policy (25).

Jackson based his predictions on two principal factors that have been corroborated by other researchers: the historical events that have culminated in the present situation, including the quick departure of the British and the continuous presence of the French in Cameroon; and the geographic and demographic situation. In terms of population, the advantage of Francophone Cameroon is about 4-1 and 10-1 in size (Kofele-Kale, *An African* 62). This demographic proportion has been used by the Francophone-dominated government to account for the unequal distribution of ministerial and administrative positions, including programs in French as compared to programs in English in the public media. Yet such an argument discounts the bicultural nature of Cameroon and the legal entity of Anglophone Cameroon within the union. This imbalance visible in the de facto status of English within Cameroon has led to a solidification of an Anglophone identity.

English and Anglophone Identity

The promotion and development of language in most countries is invariably tied to formal education, and Cameroon is no exception. Hence any investigation of English in Cameroon takes one to the classroom; however, in Anglophone Cameroon the role of English as a language transcends the classroom. In fact, the fight to maintain English in the classroom has taken place largely outside the classroom. In former British colonies like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, where English is an official language, the term Anglophone rarely comes into play among their citizens. Even during the mandate and trusteeship period, the term Anglophone was not evident among English-speaking Cameroonians. A certain energy has been injected into the term in Cameroon because it lives in opposition to the term “Francophone”. Being an Anglophone in a French-dominated Cameroon has become a unique experience in Anglophone Africa, especially in a world where English is the dominant language of international discourse. Indeed, the fight to preserve English in Anglophone Cameroon belies the presence of ninety-six ethnic languages in the region, but this situation can be better understood when the term Anglophone is closely looked at from the Cameroon perspective. Tambo Leke defines an Anglophone as: “A

person whose first official language, in the context of the Cameroon constitution is English. Although Cameroonian Anglophones by this definition may hail from any part of the country, their base is mainly in the South-West and North-West Provinces” (Tambo 36). Expanding on this definition, Alobwed’Epie explains that “Anglophones should see themselves as a people of varied ethnic languages and cultures but whose individual identities have been made to merge and function in a union of thought moulded by the English Language” (57). Nevertheless, the wide range of meanings associated with the term Anglophone is best captured in Simo Bobda’s article “Varying Perceptions of English in Cameroon: A Diachronic and Synchronic Analyses.”

The term Anglophone, as is understood in Cameroon, has mostly an ethnic connotation. It refers to a member of an ethnic group in North West and South West Provinces which were formally part of British Cameroons [...] the term Anglophone has very little to do with knowledge of the English Language; indeed, an Anglophone in the Cameroon sense does not need to know a word of English.

As a result, Anglophone ethnic identity goes beyond language to embrace the sociocultural. The legal and educational system in Anglophone Cameroon is different from that of the Francophone region. Anglophones pride themselves on being different, even in other cultural domains like food, social behavior, and dress. A simple but revealing example is that in Anglophone regions loaves of bread are sold on the street and in stores, while “baguettes” are sold in Francophone regions. A Francophone who can read and write in English is not considered an Anglophone because although he knows the language, he does not carry the cultural baggage.

Therefore, the value of English as an official language for the Anglophone carries other responsibilities. It is tied with their collective identity, the only weapon of unity they have for fighting against the Francophone majority. In contrast, and true to majority-minority dynamics, the Francophones do not rally around French as an identity symbol. Thus fighting for the equality of English Language vis-à-vis the French language in Cameroon has become synonymous with fighting for the rights of Anglophones within Cameroon. As Han-Georg Wolf puts it:

It is the imbalance in every part of Cameroon life, intertwined with the feeling of being losers in the historical processes that have created considerable discontent among the Anglophones. As underdogs...Anglophones rally around English as a common reference point. English is a form of protest against the de facto dominance of French (233).

The Anglophone fight for recognition of their “Englishness” or Anglo-Saxon identity reached a climax in the 1990s. Although the economic crisis in the mid-eighties could have led to the demands for change, the climate in the 1990s in Cameroon was fueled by the global political developments toward liberalization and regime changes in the late mid-eighties. After enduring three decades of authoritarian rule, the demise of the cold war and the move toward more democratic governments in the former Communist nations of Eastern Europe served as a springboard for Cameroonians and other Africans to ask for reforms, including multiparty politics. Within this framework, Anglophones in Cameroon mounted pressure for a recognition of their identity and independent status within the Republic of Cameroon. This resulted in the formation of different pressure groups including the Cameroon Anglophone Movement, Southern Cameroon National Council, Free West Cameroon Movement, and All Anglophone Conference.

On 26 May 1990, amid government protestations and heavy military presence, Anglophone John Fru Ndi launched a new political party, the Social Democratic Front, in the presence of 30,000-40,000 supporters. When the gendarmes could not disperse the crowd with tear gas, they opened fire and six young people were killed (Takougang and Kreiger 1998). Angered by these government-instigated deaths, John Ngu Foncha, the Anglophone elder statesman who had taken Cameroon into federation with French Cameroon, resigned from his position as the vice-president of the ruling CPDM party. In his resignation letter, Foncha explained that “the Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as ‘Les Biafrais,’ ‘Les enemies dans la maison,’ ‘les traitres,’ⁱⁱⁱ etc. and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned while the rule of the gun has replaced the dialogue which Anglophones cherish

very much” (155). Although the government eventually recognized this new party, thereby ushering in multiparty politics in Cameroon, this event served as a catalyst for social unrest around the country (see Takougang and Kreiger 1998).

In 1993 the Anglophones again took center stage to protect their English system of education, which the government had consistently tried to Francophonize. This was the climax of a ten-year struggle. In 1983 the government reformed the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced Level into a group certificate exam, which made it resemble the Francophone baccalauréat. The Anglophone students at the University of Yaounde led a strike in a protest that reverberated across major Anglophone towns. The student strikes of 1983 succeeded in forcing the government to cancel the reform. However, for most Anglophone students the proposed reform came to crystallize their marginal status within the Republic of Cameroon. Consequently, a letter titled “Open Letter to all English-Speaking Parents of Cameroon from the English-Speaking students of the North-West and South West Provinces,” drawn up on 20 August 1985, was circulated widely in Cameroon (Nyamnjoh 56). This letter catalogued several examples of the Anglophone marginalization in Cameroon and centered on the domination of the French system of education, particularly in higher education. This letter was a plea from Anglophone children to their parents to intervene in actions that they felt would inevitably lead to bloodshed. In fact, the letter warned that if English-speaking parents did not react, “We (Anglophone students) shall be forced to believe that our parents sold us to slavery and butchery for their own ends. And rather than revere your memories, your graves will be desecrated and bodily harm done to those of you unlucky to be still alive then” (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 61). The government’s reaction to this letter was widespread intimidation of Anglophone elites and phony promises to improve educational infrastructures for Anglophones. Yet four years later in 1989, another attempt was made by the then Minister of Education, Georges Ngango, to impose on Anglophones the Francophone structure of four years for the first cycle and three years for secondary education. As with the 1983 reform, the result was violent opposition and popular demonstrations by Anglophone students and their parents, which

culminated in the dismissal of the minister and a termination of the reform package.

Thus by 1992, when widespread irregularities marked the Cameroon GCE organized in Yaounde, a city in the francophone region, Anglophone teachers decided to form the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC). At the top of their agenda was the creation of a GCE board, which had been part of the deal when the University of London transferred full control of the exam to Cameroon. Instead of creating a GCE Board to conduct exams, the government allowed the Department of Exams at the Ministry of Education to take control. The result was an “alarming and unprecedented widespread mess or abuses with numerous irregularities in the conduct of GCE exams” (Nyamnjoh 75). Frustrated by the government’s reluctance to create a GCE Board, members of TAC created and installed the Cameroon Examination Board in Buea on 16 April 1992. On this day the members of TAC pledged a total commitment to the course. Among their pledges, this one stands out:

Let us all realize once and for all that the greatest bond that binds:

1. South-Westerners with South-Westerners or
2. North-Westerners, or
3. South-Westerners with North-Westerners is our common *Anglo-Saxon^{iv}* heritage exemplified through our common educational, legal, cultural and social values which differ very much and are superior to the same values on the other side of the Mungo. (Francophone Cameroon)

(Cameroon Post No. 160, 29 April 1993, 12, qtd. in Nyamnjoh 75).

Shortly after its inception, the Minister of National Education declared the Cameroon Examination Board illegal and the activities of TAC were thwarted at every opportunity by the government. The churches, both Catholic and Protestant, petitioned the government to give in to the demands of TAC. In addition, Parent Teacher Associations of Anglophone schools came together to form the Confederation of Parents–Teachers Association in Cameroon (COPTAC). COPTAC later changed its name to Confederation of Anglophone Parents-Teachers Association (CAPTAC). CAPTAC supported the actions of the TAC and took

a lead in requesting the GCE Examination Board. CAPTAC then organized a heavily attended, peaceful demonstration of parents in front of the Ministry of National Education on 12 October 1993. The government responded with gendarmes, who drenched the parents with water cannons and tear gas. In a show of absolute courage, the parents endured the tear gas and water without moving. Later that day, the Cameroon government succumbed to Anglophone demands and finally signed the text of application for the Cameroon GCE Board (Nyamnjoh 1996). The board has now been in existence for close to fifteen years and has been functioning smoothly. Significantly, it is located in Buea, the former capital of Southern Cameroons.

While the Cameroon GCE crisis was raging, another milestone in Anglophone identity occurred. Amid intimidation and fear of arrest by the military, about five thousand Anglophones attended the All-Anglophone Conference, held in Buea in April 1993. The conference was convened “for the purpose of adopting a common Anglophone stand on constitutional reform and of examining several other matters related to the welfare of ourselves, our posterity, and our territory” (Buea Declaration 8, qtd. in Konings and Nyamnjoh 218). The conference followed President Biya’s announcement in March 1993 of a national debate on constitutional reform. The conference resulted in “the Buea Declaration,” which called for a return to the federal state in order to protect the Anglo-Saxon heritage of Anglophones. This was a historic meeting that later developed into a number of organized Anglophone movements.

Another highlight of this growing Anglophone identity was a workshop on Anglophone Cameroon writing held in Yaounde. The importance of this workshop was apparent to all the participants who believed that Anglophone writers and intellectuals had a crucial role to play in the democratization process in Cameroon. The purpose of the workshop, therefore, was to highlight “the important role of Anglophone Cameroon writing in the ‘Anglophone movements,’ and to redefine (their) socio-cultural political status within the national and international arena [...]” (Lyonga, Breitingner, and Butake, foreword 9). The workshop was also meant “to take stock of the corpus and volume of Anglophone Cameroon writing, assess its standing, evaluate and

redefine its status and its functions in the present situation” (Lyonga, Breitinger, and Butake, “foreword” 9).

Addressing the conference participants, the keynote speaker, Anglophone playwright and poet Bate Besong, referred to Anglophones as the “biblical children of Ham, profoundly affected by cataclysmic changes and traumas which seem to toss us about like an Eliotean rag doll; hollow men, without speech; caught in the broken jaw, in the lost Kingdom of the prickly...prickly pear at ‘5 O’clock in the morning’ sprawled in the tumid river” (17). It is with these scars of what Bate Besong calls “brotherhood” that Anglophones rally around English. In this regard, it becomes a matter of urgent necessity for Anglophone writers to perpetuate and maintain their Anglophone identity through writing. That is why Bate Besong made this call to Anglophone writers:

The Anglophone Cameroon writer at home and in the Diaspora must tell the outside world the story of his tragic land from the point of view of its hostage minority. And such a literature, fellow writers, can only be written by you: Anglophone Cameroon writers, in Anglophone Cameroonian Language and on Anglophone Cameroonian subjects (“Literature in the season” 18).

It is now fifteen years since this conference took place, and Anglophone Cameroonian writers seem to have responded to the call with an impressive amount of published works. However, these texts remain outside the canon due to the patterns of dissemination of African Literature.

Chapter Two

The Dissemination of African Literature and Canon Formation

Where the Rain Began to Beat: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

According to Chinua Achebe “a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body”. (“Role of the Writer” 8). This saying underscores the link between history and memory in forging new ideas. Thus in order to frame literary canonization in Anglophone African Literature – the process by which some works are selected and preferred, while others are marginalized and neglected – it is imperative to look at the circumstances surrounding the publication of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the way this novel shaped the criteria used in judging “worthy” texts of African literature as a whole, and how it largely created the pattern of dissemination for African literature.

Chinua Achebe is neither the first African writer nor has he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, yet he remains the centripetal force behind the development of Anglophone African literature and the literary texts that are now considered the canon. Achebe is preceded in African literature by the numerous and often invisible producers of African oral literature. Even in print he has predecessors who wrote in African languages such as Shaban Robert, the Tanzanian writer who wrote in Swahili, Thomas Mofolo in Sotho, and D.O Fanguwa in Yoruba. Achebe has forebears in the English language as well. The earliest African writers to have written in English were probably Phyllis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano, who were brought into slavery as children. Phyllis Wheatley was renowned for her poetry and Oluadah Equiano published *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Oluadah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African Written by Himself in 1790* (?). After Equiano a number of South Africans' works were published in English. The list includes Thomas Mofolo, whose novel *Moeti oa Bochabela* in Sotho was published in English in 1920 as *The Pilgrim of the East*. Then, came Sol. T. Plaatje, whose *Mhudi* was published in 1930; and Peter Abrahams, who began with *Dark Testament*, a collection of short stories, and went on to write *Mine Boy*, *Song of City*, and *The Path of Thunder* in 1948.

Even in his own country, Nigeria, Achebe was preceded in print by Amos Tutuola. Faber and Faber, a renowned British publishing house, published Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in 1952. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was written in English by a writer who had only acquired six years of primary education, yet Tutuola's artistic quality and craftsmanship in storytelling did not go unnoticed. In his often-quoted review, Dylan Thomas held that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is a:

A brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story. Or series of stories written in young English by a West African, about a journey of an expert and devoted palmwine drinkard through a nightmare of indescribable adventures, all simply and carefully described in the bristling bush{...}The writing is nearly always terse and direct, strong, wry, flat and savoury; the big, and often comic, terrors are as near and understandable as the numerous small details of price, size and number; and nothing is too prodigious or too trivial to put down in this tall, devilish story (*The Observer*, 6 July 1952).

Thomas's review drew attention to Tutuola's work. It was later reviewed in the United States by Eric Larrabee in the *Reporter* (12 May 1953), in the *New York Times Book Review* by Selden Rodman (20 September 1953), and in *The New Yorker* by Anthony West (December 1953) (qtd. in Larson, *The Ordeal*). These reviews for the most part, highlighted Tutuola's English and style described in varying degrees as "naïve," "barbaric," and "primitive," and opened Tutuola to scrutiny and notoriety. These descriptions did not sit well with Western-educated Africans, who felt that Tutuola was not representative of the African intellectual. In fact, Bernth Lindfors holds that "Tutuola may owe much of his early notoriety to the endorsement of the famous Welsh poet" (*Critical Perspectives* 3). Not only did critics have a problem with Tutuola's language, they took issue with his originality. Indeed, Babasola Johnson claimed that Tutuola's "stories are well known, and have been published in one form or another. Most of his plots were borrowed from Fanguwa's *ogboju Ode* which has now been translated into English by Wole Soyinka under the title "The Forest of a Thousand Daemons". Tutuola even gave himself away when he referred to this book in one of the chapters as 'the brave hunter in the bush of ghosts'" (qtd. in Lindfors, *Critical Perspectives* 32).

In recent years, Tutuola's reputation has been salvaged by critics who see him as a bridge between the oral tradition and the literary tradition. This is the point Emmanuel Obiechina underscores when he explains that Tutuola has the ability to "assimilate elements peculiar to the oral tradition with elements peculiar to the literary tradition; in other words, to impose a literary organization upon essentially oral narrative material" (Obiechina, 50). It may be in this regard that Tutuola is considered as a transitional writer in the development of African literature and not a full-fledged novelist, hence losing his position to Achebe as the founding father of modern African literature. Despite the negative remarks about *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, it still captured the fascination of Western readers and was immediately translated into three languages. This early notoriety, which exemplifies one process of canon formation, worked to the advantage of Amos Tutuola. A text has to be written about; it does not really matter what is written about the text. As long as it catches the attention of critics and is reviewed by prominent newspapers and magazines, its reputation or notoriety is assured and it will become part of the literary canon if the interest is sustained. Hence, even though Tutuola is not often credited as a founding figure in modern African literature, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is part of the canon of African literature.

The next writer to be published after Tutuola was Cyprian Ekwensi, also a Nigerian. Ekwensi published *People of the City* in 1954. His concerns with the problems of urbanization were far removed from Tutuola's world of oral tradition. Critics found Ekwensi's work artistically flawed. Bernth Lindfors, for example, stated that Ekwensi was highly influenced by "third-rate American movies and fourth-rate British and American paperback novels" (Lindfors, *African* 2-14). Lindfors sums up the reception of these first two novels from Nigeria in this way: "Tutuola was too primitively African to satisfy African readers and Ekwensi too thoroughly westernized to satisfy European readers" (Lindfors, *Early Nigerian* 8-9). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provided a much-awaited middle ground.

Things Fall Apart is undoubtedly the most important novel to come out of Africa to date. It is probably the most read and studied African creative work in Africa as well as the rest of the world. To confirm its wide dissemination, the novel has been

translated into fifty known languages. The novel has sold over eight million copies in the United States alone. It is now anthologized in the Norton Anthology of English Literature; it is part of the prestigious Everyman's library and Chinua Achebe just won the 2007 Man Booker International Prize.

Things Fall Apart tells the story of Okonkwo, who rises to prominence in Umuofia due to his hard work and physical prowess. Unfortunately he is ruled by an overwhelming fear: the fear of being considered weak. To demonstrate his masculinity and strength, Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, a boy brought up under his care and also accidentally kills the son of a clansman. As punishment for the latter, he is exiled from Umuofia for seven years. During his absence, white missionaries and colonial administrators take control of Umuofia. When Okonkwo returns, he tries to rouse his warlike clan to resist the white man. As the clan assembles to discuss the crisis, a messenger arrives with an order from the white man to stop the meeting. Okonkwo swiftly beheads the messenger; instead of showing support, his people scatter in all directions. Convinced that Umuofia will not go to war against the white man, Okonkwo hangs himself. These are the bare threads of the story, enriched by Achebe's narrative skill, stylistics, and evocation of indigenous Igbo culture.

The Path to Publication

In 1956 Achebe responded to an advertisement in a newspaper and sent the manuscript of *Things Fall Apart* to London. There the manuscript made the rounds of the publishing houses, but none were willing to take the risk of publishing an African novel. The manuscript then landed at William Heinemann publishers. Heinemann's normal fiction reader read the manuscript and wrote a long report, but the firm was reluctant (Peterson 150). Top management sent it to their Education Books Division to make a final decision, since they had experience selling books in Africa. As Alan Hill reports, "I was the educational books director at Heinemann when Achebe's manuscript came into the office. I don't think he had any idea of the importance of what he had done. It did not occur to him that he was the first great African writer in the English language" (Peterson 150).

The manuscript was shown to one of the educational advisers, Professor Donald MacRae, who read it and wrote a twelve-word recommendation: "This is the best first novel I have read since the war" (Peterson 150). Thus Heinemann Educational published *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. *Things Fall Apart* received a great deal of attention in Britain and the United States. This fact in itself underscores that the initial audience of the novel was not African, and that the judgment and approval of this African literature classic was carried out of Africa.

For the most part reviews in the West were positive, although their anthropological overtone could not be missed. The *Times Literary Supplement* noted:

The great interest in this novel is that it genuinely succeeds in presenting tribal life from the inside. Patterns of feelings and attitudes appear clothed in a distinctive African imagery, written neither up nor down [...] his (Achebe) literary method is apparently simple but a vivid imagination illuminates every page and his style is a model of clarity (qtd. in Hill 121).

Achebe had written a novel acclaimed for its distinctive African texture: the setting was African, the characters were mostly African, the language was European but laced with indigenous rhetorical devices like riddles, folktales, and proverbs. Unfortunately the early critics did not regard *Things Fall Apart* as a real novel; they focused on anthropological and sociological details. Reviewing *Things Fall Apart* in the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1959, R. C. Healy claimed that the novel had "no sense of plot or development. Things simply happen one after another. This is plain and unvarnished storytelling in the best primitive tradition, probably more impressive and important as an anthropological document than a novel" (8). David Hassoldt also acknowledged Achebe's skill in presenting Ibo culture effectively, but charged that "the flashbacks in the book are confusing, the narration undisciplined" (18). Most of these critics were anthropologists, but even literary critics approached the text with myopia. They tried to fit *Things Fall Apart* within a Eurocentric novel tradition. Many of them argued that *Things Fall Apart* did not place importance on characterization; it used ethnological material instead of description; there was no convincing dialogue, and so on. Charles Larson in *The Emergence of African Fiction* argued that these

misrepresentations emanated from the critics' lack of acquaintance with the indigenous literary devices Achebe employed to organize the contents of *Things Fall Apart* into an effective whole. Nevertheless, praise for *Things Fall Apart* quickly drowned out the negative criticism.

Writing in *Black Orpheus* in May, Diana Speed commented that: The book as a whole creates for the reader such a vivid picture of Ibo life that the plot and characters are little more than symbols representing a way of life lost irrevocably within living memory. The quiet unpretentious prose, deceptively simple, lends credence to the activities of an agrarian community whose unquestioning acceptance of age-old moral values, customs, beliefs and fears make the society the entity it is...This is a piece of history; the reader feels the calamity on every purposeful and organized society in which the individual personality is not an end in itself but a contribution to a whole (50).

In this same regard, G. Adali-Morty, in another issue of *Black Orpheus*, declared that "when comments on the content and style of the book must have been exhausted, its intangible beauty remains. Some may call it magic; others the halo, the aroma, the charm or the unanalyzable quintessence which binds everything together in harmony and unity" (50). Shortly thereafter, as if to confirm all these comments, Chinua Achebe received The Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize for Literature in Africa. Writing about *Things Fall Apart*, Eustace Palmer declared that it "demonstrates a mastery of plot and structure, strength of characterization, competence in manipulation of language and consistency and depth of thematic exploration which is rarely found in a first novel (63). In addition, Keith Booker called it "an intricately crafted work" (66). Praise for *Things Fall Apart* has been so overwhelming that it has led Lizarribar Buxo to point out that "there is almost a singular lack of critique to balance out the novel's praises" (150).

***Things Fall Apart* and the Unwritten Standard**

There are certain factors that accounted for the impact of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* on the development of Anglophone African literature in particular, and African literature

in general. To begin with, the story recorded an African past laced with dignity and respect, which challenged stereotypes of Africans in European discourse. Furthermore, Achebe's handling of the English language pushed the boundaries of the "Queen's English," showing that English could unapologetically accommodate African experiences. In addition, Achebe's use of the novel genre proved successful in the enterprise of reconstructing new realities for Africa at the dawn of independence. Finally, the phenomenal sales of *Things Fall Apart* showed that African writing was profitable as well.

When *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958, African nations that had been under the bondage of colonialism were on the verge of independence and nationalism was rife. There was a need for African realities to be set in motion, realities removed from the stereotypes created by the ravages of colonialism. History had to be reinvented. As Gikandi has pointed out,

Achebe's seminal status in the history of African literature lies precisely in his ability to have realized that the novel provided a new way of reorganizing African cultures especially in the crucial juncture of transition from colonialism to national independence, and his fundamental belief that narrative can indeed propose an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in colonial and postcolonial relations of power. In other words, Achebe was possibly the first of our writers to recognize the function of the novel not solely as a mode of representing reality, but one which had limitless possibilities of inventing a new national community (3).

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* thus recreated an African past that displayed complexity and dynamism. The village of Umuofia is governed by local laws and an administrative system that ensures decency and justice. There is elaborate religious order, yet the people of Umuofia show religious tolerance by their overall kindness and courteousness toward the Christian religion introduced by Europeans. It was therefore in this celebration of the African past that Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora welcomed Achebe's first novel. By recreating recognizable human beings in the African landscape, Achebe challenged Conrad's jumping savages in *Heart of Darkness*; the docile, lazy, and excessively emotional Africans in Cary's *Mister Johnson*; and other

stereotypical images of Africans in Western literature. Achebe was well aware of his purpose as a writer, and confirmed this when he emphasized that “I would be quite satisfied if my novels [...] did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (72). In fact, as Achebe further claimed, African literature had the duty to espouse this:

That African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer’s duty is to help regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost (Achebe, “Role of Writer” 8).

Besides emphasizing the value of the past, Achebe stretched the boundaries of the English language in a way no African writer had done. His novel was not replete with the grammatical errors of Tutuola, but he infused Ibo patterns of speech in it. Hence *Things Fall Apart* makes use of abundant proverbs and similes drawn from the local environment, which gave the speech of his characters a distinctly African flavor. The dexterity and skill with which a person conjures up proverbs to buttress a point in a debate or conversation serves as a measure of his wisdom. As Achebe explains in *Things Fall Apart*, “Among the Ibo the art of talking is taken seriously and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (7). Achebe was conscious of the contradiction inherent in an African writing in the colonizer’s language, but he seemed to have found a way out:

For an African, writing in English is not without its set-backs. He often finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life. Caught in that situation he can do one of two things. He can try and contain what he wants to say within the limits of conventional English or he can try to push back those limits to accommodate his ideas. The first method produces confident,

uninspired and rather flat work. The second method can produce something new and valuable to the English language as well as to the material he is trying to put over ("Role of Writer" 12).

Achebe definitely makes use of the second method, and countless examples abound in his works. His success in his use of English can be seen in the responses from critics and the numerous writers who have followed his style. Reviewing *Things Fall Apart* in 1959, G. Adaly Morty said of Achebe that "he knows and uses English with consummate skill," and "his language has the ring and rhythm of poetry. At the background of the words can be heard thrumming syncopation of the sound of Africa—the gongs, the drums, the castanets and the horns (qtd. in Rand Bishop 43). J. P. Clark concurred, stating that if "there is a faithful reproduction of speech habits of one people into another, as Mr. Chinua Achebe does significantly in English with Ibo dialogue proceeding by technique of the proverb, then I think the artist has achieved a reasonable measure of success" (qtd. in Bishop 44).

Thus, most writers after Achebe followed Achebe's standard; the novel was the dominant genre and came to be representative of African literature although it is the genre most alien to African culture. Many novels after *Things fall Apart*, including Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), T. M. Aluko's *One Man One Wife* (1959), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1975), and Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child* all recaptured in varying degrees the essence of *Things Fall Apart* by exposing a vibrant African culture and using English with an African coloration. Even when writers grappled with disillusionment as a result of betrayal from the leaders of newly independent states, as in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the role of African literature as underscored by Achebe was at work. This also holds true for women writers, who responded to Achebe not only by writing to recreate the dignity of the African past but the dignity of the African woman who had been denigrated further by stereotypical representations in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and other male-authored texts. Hence Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, (1966) and Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* (1966) highlighted female characters who presented a complexity that demanded to be acknowledged and respected. These novels can

now all be comfortably called classics of African literature. This is why C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors talk of the “school of Achebe” (6), and Lewis Nkosi holds that in Achebe’s recreation of the past and his presentation of “history as the ‘hero’” of the novel, Achebe “blazed a trail large enough to be followed by other writers” (33). But Achebe did not only blaze a trail for African writers, he also blazed a trail for Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Publishing and Canonicity: Heinemann’s African Writers Series

After the financial success of *Things Fall Apart*, Alan Hill, the then director at Heinemann Educational Books, felt that other writers must exist where Achebe came from. He undertook a trip to West Africa and found the potential he had hoped for, but they lacked “a publisher with the confidence and resources to launch them on a worldwide market” (Hill 123). As Keith Sambrook, who joined the staff on the series in January 1963, explains:

The African writers series was started by Van Milne who had joined Heinemann to develop their African Publishing; he persuaded Alan Hill to back the idea in 1961, and was able to do this because Heinemann already had the copyright of the two earlier Achebe novels, *Things Fall Apart*, and *No Longer at Ease*, and he had got Cyprian Ekwensi to write *Burning Grass*, and worked with Kenneth Kaunda on *Zambia shall be Free*. Those were the first titles launched in 1962 (Peterson 151).

A written tradition of African literature in English had begun, and the creation of a canon of African literature in English had begun as well. However, the format for fiction existing at the time had to be altered if the books were to be financially accessible in Africa. Hence Heinemann made a decision:

The plan was to start a paperback series, confined to black African authors, the books were to be attractively designed with high quality production and sold at a cheap price—as low as 25p at the outset. The price was achieved by giving small educational discounts...Outside Africa; the books would sell at the normal trade paperback terms (Hill 123).

By the end of 1962, Van Milne left the series and Alan Hill, who had become aware of the need for specialized help, asked Chinua Achebe to become the first editor for the series. Achebe was hired in 1962; As Keith Sambrook explains:

For the next ten years Chinua edited the series, we published 100 titles in ten years, an average of ten per year. He read them all, commented on them, said whether he thought they were worth publishing or not, and in addition to the hundred there were many more that we didn't accept. In many cases he did major editorial work, recommending to authors important improvements to their work (Peterson 153).

The sales were phenomenal, and "Achebe's own books selling by the million provided the economic basis for the rest of the series" (Peterson 153). Alan Hill also concedes that by 1984 when they had published 300 titles, one-third of the sales revenue from the entire list came from Achebe's four novels. Consequently, Achebe's freely offered literary judgment plus his own tremendous sales were the backbone of the African Writers Series (Peterson 153-154). Three things accounted for this success. First, the launching of the series coincided with the independence of African countries and growing nationalism on the continent. This growing nationalism led to an Africanization of the educational system. Hence, there was a need in African schools for literature written by Africans. Second, Heinemann was an educational publisher; with their growing market in Africa, mailings to schools, contact with inspectors and universities, Heinemann was able to get these books into the network in Africa. Third, in the West there was a growing interest in this literature for a variety of reasons. The renewed impetus in the African American civil rights and feminist movements in the United States had opened up the opportunity for minority discourse, thus literature by women, African Americans, Native Indians, and Hispanics was becoming visible and slowly gaining entrance into academia.

In *Celebrating Forty Years of the African Writers Series*, Ngugi wa Thiongo explains that:

The growth and consolidation of the modern tradition of African literature in English are almost inseparable from the genesis and growth of Heinemann's African Writers Series. African writing is the nearest thing we have to a pan-African

common heritage and this, in no small measure is due to the African Writers Series (Heinemann 40th Anniversary Celebration Pamphlet, 2002).

Heinemann's importance, underscored here by Ngugi, has been quite visible. It is the only series which has produced three African winners of the Nobel Prize for literature. These laureates are Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt, Nadine Gordimer from South Africa, and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria. The series also has to its credit other prestigious literary prizes, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, The Noma Award for African Writing, The Caine Prize for African Writing, and the Guardian Fiction Prize (40th Anniversary Pamphlet). It is important to note that prestigious literary prizes are the stuff on which the canon feeds. Prestigious literary prizes instantly canonize a writer and a canonized writer consolidates his/her position with a literary prize. The power of Heinemann and multinational publishers is seen again when one looks at the list of Africa's 100 Best Books in the twenty-first century. Encouraged by Ali Mazrui, the Zimbabwe International Book Fair launched the contest to select Africa's 100 best books of the twenty-first century. The winners were announced on 19 February 2002 by the president of the fifteen-man jury, Njabulo Ndebele. In the creative works category, over 90 percent of the books selected were published by multinationals; Heinemann tops the list with eleven entries. As Loretta Stec contends, "The names winning these prizes and awards may be leading names in African literature to an international audience largely because these were the writers chosen to be published and reviewed and acclaimed by companies with the capital and the prestige to do so. In the context of Africa, Heinemann produced a pantheon of literary greats for an international audience" (142).

Archiving and the Future Canon of Anglophone African Literature

Written literature depends on effective record keeping as a basis for new writing. Literary texts and biographical information on writers need to be preserved, not only to keep the texts for posterity but to help in reconstructing accurate editions of texts and literary biographies.

However, the present dissemination trend of African literature presents a situation where the few Anglophone literary manuscripts that have been archived are housed in the UK and North America. To date, this archiving of African literature is not being done with a systematic interest to keep this literature for posterity. The majority of the archiving being done is largely a byproduct of publishing abroad. In the days when most African writers resided in Africa, once a literary text was published outside Africa it was easier to sell the manuscript to a library located where the book was published instead of mailing it back to the writer. Also, after talking with some authors, I get the impression that some African writers do not consider the manuscript to be a valuable product. To them, only the published text or poem makes them a writer. Such writers do not appreciate or comprehend the pivotal role of primary documents for future literary scholars.

As a result, Anglophone African literary manuscripts are scattered all over the UK and the United States. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London has fifty-eight manuscripts from the African Writers Series (library catalog on the Web). Some examples include galley proofs of Okigbo's *Labyrinths* (MS English 326710) and a typescript of Amos Tutuola's *Ajaiyi and his Inherited Poverty* (MS English 288001). Even more revealing, it holds the typescript of an unpublished translation of the late D.O. Fanguwa's *Aditu Olodumare* (MS English 326709) and some of Ngugi's short stories and novels, including complete texts of *Weep Not Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Furthermore, the African Writers Series files, which contain editorial exchanges with writers, are housed in the University of Reading library. In the United States, Harvard University holds some of Achebe's manuscripts of novels, essays, and correspondence (See Barbara A. Burg et al.), including sections of *Arrow of God*. After the failure over several years of the University of Ife to keep its promise to archive *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (Lindfors, "The Future" 166), it is now housed in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, which also has manuscripts by Schreiner, Bosman, Paton, Gordimer, and the early writings of Doris Lessing. In addition, Northwestern University holds manuscripts by Denis Brutus and Arthur Nortje, while Indiana University, United States has an abundance of papers by Gordimer and Fugard. This researcher was unsuccessful in locating the manuscript of *Things Fall Apart*. However, Lindfors

explained in an email to me that the manuscript is missing. According to Lindfors, Achebe loaned the handwritten manuscript to Thomas Melone, a Cameroonian scholar and Melone failed to return it. I have since taken up the challenge to search for this manuscript. During my recent interview with Achebe on February 15th 2008, he confirmed that Thomas Melone borrowed the manuscript because he was writing a book on Yeats. Achebe also revealed that he “did not have very much respect for manuscripts then...” (Interview, Summit 12). In addition, he claims that when he tried contacting Melone “he wouldn’t reply to letters, and so it became clear to me that he wanted to hold on to it for whatever it was worth.” (Interview, *Summit*, 12). Thomas Melone is now dead but the search continues. When asked where the manuscript should go if it is found, Achebe answered “if I had my way, the manuscript should be in Nigeria. But to do that would be to burn it because people don’t know the value; the facilities would not be provided” (Interview *Summit* 12-13)

The implication of this archival trend is that if African countries make no conscious effort to archive their literary treasures, within a hundred years most of the literary masterpieces will be lost and African literary texts or literary biographies will be constructed from the fragmented remnants found in the libraries of the UK and United States. Most of the works from the present generation will thus come to naught, and the canon of twentieth-century African literary works will again be incomplete and not representative of Africa’s literary output. Using Nigeria as an example, Lindfors graphically explains the situation:

Fifty years from now, when scholars are attempting to edit the complete works of Wole Soyinka, they will find it extremely difficult to establish accurate texts for *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomie* (to mention only two works flawed with numerous misprints) if none of the author’s manuscripts and none of the publisher’s proofs are available for study. Others who may be interested in larger matters such as the process of creation, the tactics of translation, or the impact of technological change (e.g. literacy) on traditions of verbal art will be sorely disappointed if the papers of such writers as Okigbo, Okara and Fagunwa have not been saved. And anyone attempting to write a literary bibliography of an author will be severely

handicapped if no one has bothered to collect the author's letters ("Towards" 152).

Unfortunately, literary archiving is not given a privileged position in national libraries and archives. National archives basically concern themselves with preserving documents relating to the political history of the nation.

What You See is What You Get: Teaching the Canon of African Literature

In conducting research for this study, I sent out questionnaires to determine which African writers are being taught in the United States to see whether the curricula has responded to the recently published works of African literature, especially those published on the continent. In this process I collected ninety-eight syllabi of different courses on African literature covering 2000-2002. These syllabi show that Achebe, Ngugi, Soyinka, and Armah dominate the teaching lists. Most of those who responded to the survey noted, however, that they would have liked to teach lesser-known works but have no choice due the unavailability of these works in the United States. One of the respondents lamented, "It's terrible the way the "canon" has formed around the period from 1958-1975. Except for very few writers, like Buchi Emecheta, all recent writing is unavailable. It is a shame that Soyinka's plays of the 1980's and 1990's are all out of print. *King Baabu* was not even distributed in the US [...] I particularly wish *Last Harmattan* were still in print." If texts by Soyinka can face dissemination problems then it goes without saying that most works published by new writers with indigenous publishers in Africa have not left their publishing locale.

However, interestingly enough, one-third of the syllabi received are for courses having to do with gender. The courses include titles like "Black Women Writers: Cross-cultural Connections," "African Women Writers," "Gender and Nationalism," "Race, Gender and Postcolonial Discourse." Among African women writers frequently studied are Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dagarembga, Assia Djebar, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba, and Sindiwe Magona. Thus African literature is thriving in the United States, and the African literature canon seems to have opened up to allow for women writers. As Paul Lauter posits,

“Changing the canon has [...] become a major objective of literary practitioners of women studies, black studies, and other ‘ethnic’ studies—the academic wings of the social movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s” (23). This statement can be validated when one looks at previous surveys.

In 1976 Zinta Konrad carried out a survey to attempt “to learn which works were frequently taught, which works were not being taught and the reasons why these works were not taught” (260). From this survey Konrad came up with a list of fifteen frequently cited works. Of course, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* topped the chart; other members of the elite texts included Camera Laye’s *The Dark Child*, Ferdinand Oyono’s *Houseboy*, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *Weep Not, Child*, and *Modern Poetry from Africa* by Moore and Beire (266). The list did not include a text written by an African woman. It is interesting to note that Heinemann originally published over ten of the titles cited. Judging from her survey, Konrad concludes,

These texts constitute the classics of African literature as taught in the United States. It is apparent that African literature is very much in its initial stages of growth in university curricula. The works listed are repeatedly taught to beginning students with little or no previous exposure to African literature. The heavy concentration of relatively few works would also indicate that few courses are taught beyond a general introductory level (266-267).

The only name that is conspicuously absent from Konrad’s first fifteen is Soyinka, but one can conjecture that this is because Soyinka is primarily a dramatist and the novel is the genre most widely disseminated, or maybe because of the apparent obscurity of language, Soyinka’s novel, *The Interpreters* could not make it in an introductory course. Keith Booker makes this point when he explains the scope of his book *The African Novel in English*:

The emphasis on accessibility has led me to exclude important English language novels such as Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* or Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*, largely because I find that these texts are extremely difficult for western readers, especially those who are just beginning to study the African novel (ix).

Bernth Lindfors also conducted similar research that shows that there is a direct relationship between the way African literature is disseminated and the books that are considered “the canon” in Anglophone African literature. Lindfors compiled *Black African Literature in English*, published in three volumes. The first volume covers the years 1936-1976 and contains 3305 entries; the second covers 1977-1981 and contains 2831 entries; and the third covers 1982-1986 and contains 5689 entries. He then published a supplement that covers 1987-1991. Combining this data from 1936-1991, he came up with what he calls the “Famous Authors’ reputation test,” “a simple citation index that recorded the frequency with which an author and his works were discussed in detail in print by literary scholars and critics” (“Big Shots” 62). The results identified forty authors ranging from Soyinka in first position with 2961, to Okpewho in fortieth position with a score of 167. In 1986 Lindfors also undertook a tour of forty universities in Anglophone Africa that included Cameroon but excluded South Africa. In these universities he noted which Anglophone African authors students were now required to read, and the frequency with which authors were taught in literature and drama courses. Lindfors reviewed “194 courses taught at 30 universities in 13 African nations...representing as much as 60 per cent of the total number of African literature courses taught in Anglophone Africa in the mid-eighties” (“Teaching” 47). Although the data from both studies reveal that “there are disparities between the preferences of the critics and the preferences of the teachers” (“Big Shots” 70), many of the authors appear in both lists. In fact, the same three writers, Soyinka, Achebe, and Ngugi, dominate both lists. Lindfors explains the list of preferred texts as follows:

First of all the titles on the list have been published by multinational publishers. True, in some countries there may be local editions...but the only editions of these works that are available throughout Africa are those issued by a multinational firm. Second, the publisher most frequently represented on the list is Heinemann, which can claim nine of the top ten texts, sixteen in the top twenty, and thirty of the full list of forty-one titles (“Desert” 130).

One may argue that this is the usual pattern in canon formation since institutions are always reluctant to change a

successful curriculum. The argument hinges on the assumption that new “good” books with value will eventually replace less-valuable works written in an earlier period. Analyzing Lindfors’s research, Loretta Stec concludes that “Heinemann has had a very strong effect on what Anglophone African literary works are considered valuable enough to read, discuss, analyze in print, and teach: hence their value transmutes them into a canonical list” (144). Obviously, this kind of “kingmaker” status in the hands of a foreign publisher also determines the kinds of writing that are validated.

Judging from the twenty-six names in the combined rankings column, Lindfors believes there is evidence for what he terms “brilliant conclusions on canon formation” to help “young writers who may aspire to canonical status” (“Big Shots” 73). The conclusions are listed numerically from 1-4. The first conclusion is that to be a successful writer “it helps to be a West African, preferably Nigerian”; being Ghanaian is equally advantageous. He also adds that being East African is not an “insurmountable” handicap judging from the presence of Ngugi and Okot on the prestigious list. However, “the odds seemed to be stacked against Central Africans, not one of whom has yet attained any visibility in the Anglophone literary canon.” The second conclusion is that “it helps to publish your works with a multinational firm rather than with a local publisher who has no means of international distribution.” Third, it helps to write something that is acceptable for use in educational institutions in order to become part of the canon. Lindfors adds here that “if your book gets adopted as a required text on the nationwide secondary school leaving exam, your fame and possibly fortune will be assured.” Lindfors’ fourth and last conclusion is that “it helps to write well”. It is an irony that the need to write well comes in last place. The aspects of canon formation raised here by Lindfors stretch back to Achebe’s pioneering role in African literature. The fact that Achebe is Nigerian and was a founding editor for Heinemann is not unconnected to the presence of many Nigerians on the Heinemann African Writers Series. In fact, in a paper titled “The African Writers Series” Ruth Hamilton-Jones, one of the editors of the African Writers Series, confirms this view:

Chinua Achebe was based in West Africa, so naturally the list he began to build was largely West African. As time went on,

this affected the way people perceived African literature because the African literature being published was West African so it looked as though that was where the literary talent was located.

It is worth noting that this is still the international perception. Also, the view that a literary text aiming at canonicity must be published by a multinational firm finds its roots in the publication of the first literary texts by Heinemann, which received their canonical value by being disseminated and critiqued first in the West before Africa heard of them. While the multinational publishers exposed the African writers to an international audience, they inadvertently stifled creativity and limited the creative arena. Kole Omotoso reproved this tendency when he charged that

One side effect of a foreign audience is that this audience can take only a few “phenomenal” African writers at one time. There can only be one Achebe at a time and his way of writing also becomes the way African literature must be written. If another writer attempts to do something else, he upsets the foreign audience and there is an end. If our audience was home based, then we could have any number and variety of writers because, except there be deliberate attempt to court trouble, the sky is wide enough for two birds to fly in peace! (Oluwasanmi et al. 256)

In addition, since Heinemann Educational Books was primarily involved in the sale of school textbooks, when it became involved in the production of African fiction they were marketed primarily as school textbooks. This has affected African readers. As Omotoso explains:

African readers, in dealing with African literature, approach it as something to be studied, crammed, perused, and waded through. It is not to be come to as a natural process of browsing around to find interesting reading material. Instead the student peruses the works of Soyinka and Achebe but relaxes with Harold Robbins, Dennis Wheatly and Marie Corelli (257).

Nonetheless, the editors at Heinemann were aware of their ability to reach educational markets in Africa and the impact this

had on canonicity. In reference to Ben Okri's refusal to publish his novel *The Famished Road* with Heinemann, Becky Clarke, one of the editors of the African Writers Series in a paper titled "The History, Development And Effect Of The African Writers Series On African Culture And Publishing," argues that "despite his (Okri's) enormous success within the international community, he is hardly known in his own country. The irony is that had Ben Okri published with AWS, he would certainly be on his way to becoming a household name because of Heinemann's reputation in educational publishing and excellent network of contacts in Africa." This statement underscores the power of multinational publishers like Heinemann in canonizing African literary texts, even in Africa.

The Turning Tide

The success by Heinemann and other multinational publishers in bringing African literature to a wide audience has not been available to the younger generation of African writers. As Niyi Osundare explains,

One thing is sure, the period in which Achebe and Soyinka launched themselves on to the literary scene was saner and kinder than the one in which their successors are presently trapped. Whereas their works received enthusiastic attention from publishers and were distributed all over the world, overseas publishers now see African literature as a bad risk [...] (qtd. in Gibbs and Mapanje, 188).

Overseas publishers like Heinemann who had launched the careers of the first generation of African writers underwent their own changes in the '80s. For example, Heinemann was later taken over by British Tyre and Rubber and then by other corporate bodies that found profits more interesting than developing African literature. The new managing director "decided that only one or two titles should be added to the series each year instead of about ten. Large numbers of books were put out of print" (Ruth Hamilton, AWS Web page). The series was even suspended for a while. Although the African Writers Series resumed publication, its importance as an outlet for African literature was severely curtailed. In 1965 Achebe could boast that *Things Fall Apart* had sold 20,000

copies in Nigeria alone. The market trend now shows another picture. As Hamilton again reveals in her paper "African Writers Series," "Today, the bulk of our sales are to the US, and the books are largely bought by students doing African Studies courses, which include literature, politics, and social studies." In fact, talking in 1996 to Loretta Stec, Jean Hay, the editor of Heinemann's African Writer's Series in the United States, revealed that Heinemann publishes about eight titles a year and most of these are novels. She declared that "we aren't even trying to publish poetry; it doesn't sell. The one exception is an anthology of African women's poetry that has done quite well" (Stec 143). This shows another centripetal force that publishers exert on what kind of literature is made available, and what titles are presented to the African audience as their own literature.

Another example of editorial power can be seen in the handling of Amma Darko's manuscript "Cross of a Kind." As Zak reports, the manuscript readers acknowledged that the work had potential as a school examination text since it raised social issues like educational discrimination against girls, rape, widowhood, and witchcraft. Yet Heinemann rejected the manuscript because it needed "structural changes and development of characters in order to give the narrative more depth...make it a tighter read and a book that will travel" (98). A book that will "travel" is one that will, for the most part, satisfy readers in metropolitan centers in Europe and North America where Heinemann sells best. Thus the African Writers Series implicitly creates a literary tradition that suits the West; this generates creative problems for the African writer.

Another poignant aspect explained by the Heinemann editor Hay is the fact that branch offices no longer exist in Africa, therefore the process of soliciting manuscripts is "indirect." "Indirect" means that this editor's duty is to request manuscripts for the African Writers Series from African writers living in the United States, rather than seeking writers resident in Africa (Stec 144). This has huge implications for the type of writers that are published.

It is in this regard that Achebe saw the role of the multinational publisher as a temporal necessity. He predicted that if we are going to have a genuine literary tradition, then the entire book business should have an indigenous base. Not just writers being here but their publishers, editor, bookshops,

printers. And I have no apologies for this. We “thank you very much” to those who saw us through the initial painful steps, but I think if we going to grow at all, we won’t grow shuttling between Lagos and London and Paris and New York. I think London, Paris and New York will in the future, come here and take what catches their fancy from what we produce. Like anybody else, they’ll compete for what we have and reissue abroad works, which originate with local publishers (qtd. in Gibbs 98).

But Achebe’s dream crashed in the falling economies in Africa. Hitherto thriving indigenous publishing in countries like Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria began to face insurmountable difficulties. Zell Hans, writing in 1993, stated that

the indigenous book and publishing industries in most African countries are currently in a state of crisis after a decade of relative boom and rapid expansion. Much of Africa has become a bookless society. Because of foreign exchange constraints, most libraries in Africa have been unable to purchase any new books for the past few years, much less maintain their journal subscriptions. Research and teaching meanwhile have been crippled. The constantly deepening economic recession and chronic balance of payments problems in most African countries have taken their toll on publishing and book development in general and the output of African writing in particular (309).

This implies that submitting a manuscript for publishing is a process laced with difficulties for most African writers. Thus potential masterpieces are stillborn and those that get the chance of indigenous delivery die a premature death due to lack of dissemination channels. The only books that can be disseminated on a wide scale are books published by multinational publishers, but these publishers are no longer interested, given the present economic difficulties related to publishing new works from Africa. As a result what gets continuously disseminated are the works published in the ’60s and ’70s.

Consequently, there is a dire need for the few titles published by local publishers to be made visible by viable dissemination

channels. If, for example, a text is published in Yaounde, Lagos, or Accra and circulates only in these cities, how will teachers in other African areas or elsewhere know of its existence? A locally published bestseller in Cameroon is usually not known even in neighboring Nigeria. For example, D.O. Fanguwa's novel *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* that has always been featured on the Nigerian school certificate exam (Wilkinson 100) is hardly known in Cameroon. If teachers are not aware of these books, how can a school, bookshop, or library order them? Even where they are known, the financial constraints of obtaining them coupled with the shortcomings of the library system lead to a situation where most audiences in African countries cannot keep up with their own literature except through school examination texts. As a result, the works of new African writers that make it through the strenuous process of publishing are not known outside their home base; critics cannot review them; and they do not acquire value and become visible. Since the multinational publishers have shown "less interest in African literature since the first flush of curiosity coming out of the newly independent countries" (Soyinka 92) and new texts are not coming through their pipeline, African institutions are forced to prescribe the old classics year in and year out.

As Hans Zell posits:

Few indigenous publishers have been able to meet the challenges of the book shortages caused by economic crises. Moreover, the majority of them are still at a disadvantage over the multinationals and are unable to compete with them on real terms. A viable indigenous publisher that can produce books on a scale that matches local needs is, sadly, still largely a dream in most parts of the continent (370).

Osundare confirms this same view when he underscores the fact that

African literature is thus in a painfully illiterate bind: books published by Africans abroad are not available even in their home countries due to unfavorable currency exchange rates, while the few published in Africa are not available beyond their immediate locality. To make matters worse, those journals and magazines which provided vibrant literary outlets in the 1960s and 1970s are either now extinct or going through protracted

dormancy. The bookshops are empty (qtd. in Gibbs and Mapanje 188).

Thus the canon for African literature in English is artificially induced but could reflect a dynamic corpus of work as richly varied as the African continent itself if the politics of publishing and dissemination were different. In his 2003 book *The Ordeal of the African Writer*, Charles Larson effectively addresses the production and dissemination of African literature. The book discusses the publishing situation in a few African countries and presents testimonies from about a dozen writers and publishers. However, Larson is aware of the need for individual country studies when he admits that “detailed information about publishing in specific African countries is difficult to obtain”(101). Larson concludes his study by stating that “the crisis in African writing lies not with the writers themselves but in the complicated and debilitating environment in which they work.” Despite this debilitating environment, writing, publishing, and reading of African literature still thrives in Africa. Nevertheless, during these fifty years of extensive writing of African literature in English, most studies of African literature have dealt only with issues of form. Very few attempts have been made to look at the production and dissemination patterns of African literature on the continent itself. As Lindfors has rightfully observed, “The pity is that so many African scholars have been drawn toward empty formalistic exercises when there is so much that they alone are ideally situated to do to enrich African literary studies” (“The Future” 160).

Locating Texts: Enriching the Canon

It is now fifty years since Heinemann launched the African Writers Series and African literature in English has joined mainstream literature. In fact, *Things Fall Apart* has been included in the seventh edition of the *Anthology of English Literature* “as a major contribution of the 20th century” (Achebe, “Unesco” 48). The series was therefore a pioneer in providing African writers with outlets for their work and for making their voices available to an international readership (Altbach 7). Unfortunately, this “international readership” has dominated the readership on the continent due to dissemination patterns in Europe and the United

States. This in turn has helped to create a canon that does not reflect the regional variety of the continent.

Nonetheless, due to the reduced activities of multinational publishing houses like Longman, Heinemann, Macmillan, and OUP in producing African literature and the exorbitant costs of importing books into their countries, resident Africans are obliged to read the few locally produced texts. Although these books may not enjoy international status, they and their writers are household names within the national boundaries. Therefore, to enrich African literary studies it does not suffice to focus only on multinational publishers as the sole outlets for African literature. There is a need for individual country and territory investigation to locate works that are being read and to study existing dissemination trends. Such a study will provide a basis for enhancing visibility of new texts worldwide and preserve them for posterity. As Buma Kor confirms:

The way to know all about the literature of Africa is to know the different writings from different parts of Africa, the distinctive characteristics embodied in all writings from country to country or region to region. It is not grouping them together, but singling them out, analyzing the different themes problems, styles, messages ("The Literature" 64).

It is in this light that this study of the production and dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon literature becomes important and urgent.

Chapter Three

The Book Chain and Anglophone Cameroon Literature

In 1982 Nalova Lyonga and Bole Butake, two Anglophone Cameroonian critics, declared, “Cameroon literature in English is belatedly in the bud; still experimental in the main [...] in terms of what has been published, both locally and abroad, there is very little indeed” (“Cameroon” 121). It is now twenty-six years since Butake and Lyonga made their assessment. The publishing climate has not changed significantly, although the corpus of literature has increased and Anglophone writers are slowly becoming known outside their immediate environment. Despite the importance of oral literature in Africa, it is generally accepted that the book makes the writer. The book as object begins its journey from the publisher with the intention of getting to the reader. Mary Jay, a senior consultant at the African Book Collective, explains in detail the role of a publisher thus:

The publisher commissions a book, or evaluates unsolicited manuscripts; investigates co-publishing possibilities; edits the manuscript; develops a positive and dynamic working relationship with the author in terms of development of the book, contract, promotion and accountability; clears reproduction fees/copyright permissions; prepares an estimate of costs and sales, and sets price; oversees design and layout of the book; commissions illustrations; produces camera-ready copy, or manuscripts for typesetting; decides on print run; puts the printing back to tender; oversees and monitors the printing process; undertakes advance promotion; promotes and markets the published book, involving the author in, for example, reading, broadcasting, promotion tours etc.; distributes to booksellers; libraries, ministries, schools and universities, institutions, and individuals; [...] The publisher is thus the center of the book publishing chain: writer, publisher, bookseller, reader (“Getting Published” 211).

Although not all of these components are necessary for every title, the publisher remains the launching pad of the book chain. He sets the book in motion toward the reader and genuinely succeeds only when the book reaches the maximum number of target readers.

Setting the Stage: An Overview of Literary Publishing in Anglophone Africa

Today publishing in Africa is generally in a crisis. The foremost publisher of African literature, Heinemann, announced in February 2003 that the forty-year-old African Writers Series that launched African literature onto the international market would be discontinued. The only types of books in Africa with a ready market are textbooks. Publishing of general literature has been quite slow. The economic crisis that has been ravaging the continent since the mid-eighties has led to the devaluation of currencies in many African nations. The importation of paper, ink, and other printing materials, which were already expensive, has become unattainable. International trade has proven unprofitable; most multinational publishers have reduced the number of African writers they publish each year and have closed some of their regional offices. Most of the indigenous publishers who were barely making ends meet have closed shop. Because of this, during the past two decades and a half critics have claimed that Africa is experiencing a “book draught” (Lindfors, “Desert” 123), Africa is in a “painful illiterate bind,” (Osundare qtd. In Gibbs and Mapanje, 188) and Africa has become a “bookless society.” (Zell, 309)

These descriptions compare to what obtained during the first twenty-five years of independence in most Anglophone African nations. At independence, most books in Africa were imported from Europe. In the case of Anglophone Africa, the books came from Britain since the education syllabus was patterned after Britain. British multinational publishing houses like Oxford University Press (OUP), Macmillan, Heinemann, Nelson, and Longman dominated book publishing in Anglophone Africa. The nationalism that fueled the fight for independence in most African countries also led to the Africanization of the school syllabus. Literate Africans felt the need to write their own histories and literature to change the perception of Africans in European-authored books. Since the publication of Nigerian Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, which launched modern African Literature, literary creativity in Anglophone Africa has risen and fallen with the publishing fortunes of Nigeria. By 1972 when Achebe left the African Writers Series, Heinemann had published 100 titles; the 100th title was Achebe’s *Girls at War*.

These 100 titles showed a heavy presence of writers from Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. There are a few reasons that accounted for the early literary success of these countries. At independence they had all inherited viable infrastructures necessary for a literary culture, such as a printing press, university, growing urban centers, and a sizable population educated in English. For example, the University of Makerere in Kampala, established in 1939 to provide higher education for the whole of East Africa, became a nesting ground for artists from different regions. The university student journal *Penpoints* provided an opportunity for aspiring artists to have their works in print. As Mohamed Bakari and Ali Mazuri argue, it was in Makerere that “the first examples of literature drawing on the East African experience were created” (qtd. in Elder 52). Some of these artists include famous names in African literature like Ngugi and Okot P’ Bitek. Equally, the University of Ibadan, founded in 1943 as an extension of the University of London, provided a site of development for young Nigerian writers. These budding artists created the Mbari writer’s club and Mbari publications in July 1961. Mbari, largely inspired by Ulli Beier, launched the journal *Black Orpheus*, which published the writings of authors from Nigeria and other regions of Africa. Some of these authors were hardly known at the time, but are now celebrities of African literature and include Dennis Brutus, Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, and Tchikaya Utamsi (Zell 378). These university centers also served as venues for intellectual activities; for example, the historical African Literature Conference held in Kampala in 1962 was very significant in fostering East African literature. It was at this conference that Achebe read Ngugi’s *Weep Not Child* and recommended it for publication in the African Writers Series. This publication launched Ngugi’s career on the international market.

With its large population, Nigeria has always had a profitable market for books. This evidence of a viable market attracted investors like the multinational publishers who quickly established regional branches in Nigeria; this in turn gave Nigerians increased publishing opportunities. By the mid-sixties British publishers were publishing about six Nigerian novels each year (Griswold 62). In the seventies Nigeria was booming with oil money; with the increasing number of literate African youth, Griswold confirms that “the Nigerian market was the prize as the

country had the numbers, the naira (Nigerian currency), and the burgeoning educational system” (62). Indigenous publishers like Ethiope, Oniboje, and Fourth Dimensions blossomed as well as university presses attached to the several universities in Nigeria. This boom in indigenous publishing also occurred in other Anglophone regions like Kenya. In Kenya the East Africa publishing house, founded in 1965, began indigenous publishing. Although the East African countries later broke apart, literary publishing continued to thrive in Kenya. From 1973-1976, Kenya enjoyed a significant growth of indigenous publishing houses. Ten new indigenous houses were established: Pan African Researchers Ltd.; Comb Books; TransAfrica Publishers, Ltd.; Bookwise, Ltd.; Shungwaya Publishers, Ltd.; Gazelle Books; Uzima Press, Ltd.; Evangel Publishing House; Gakara Press; and Foundation Books (Okwanya 89). In addition, The Heinemann Educational Books regional office in East Africa changed to East African Publishers in 1986, headed by the veteran East African publisher Henry Chakava. The works published here include titles by Ngugi and local editions of Africa’s major writers like Achebe, Armah, Mariama Ba, and Peter Abrahams. Although these Anglophone African nations like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya have been undergoing crisis in the past decade and more, they are still ahead of other Anglophone African countries that did not inherit at independence the infrastructures necessary for a literary culture, and whose writers did not get international exposure from multinational publishers. One such colonial territory is Anglophone Cameroon.

Publishing and Anglophone Cameroon Literature

Foreign Ventures

While Nigerian literature was launched in London, Anglophone Cameroonians launched theirs in Nigeria. Taking advantage of the publishing infrastructures and a shared colonial history, Sankie Maimo published *I am Vindicated*, a drama, with Ibadan University Press in 1959. Maimo was teaching in a secondary school in Nigeria when this text got published. *I am Vindicated* dramatizes a conflict between modernity and tradition, represented by Bola, a schoolboy, and Baba Kasim, the village

fetish priest. However, modernity triumphs when Bola reveals Baba Kasim as a charlatan and he commits suicide. This text became the first published literary text by an Anglophone Cameroonian, and Maimo sold over one thousand copies in Nigeria. It was a school text in the May Flower Ikenne Secondary School in Nigeria, where he taught drama. When the Biafran civil war broke out in Nigeria in 1966, Maimo returned to Cameroon, bringing fifty copies of *I am Vindicated*, which were sold in Cameroon. Kraus, a European publisher, reprinted the play in 1970 but this reprint never made it into the Cameroon market because a copy cost 9,000CFA at the time (Maimo interview). However, a second edition was published in Cameroon in 1985.

Then in 1969, Lagos African University Press (later Pilgrim Publishers) published *Promise* by Jedida Asheri, the pen name of Prudentia Hene Chila. This first text from an Anglophone Cameroon woman is an effectively written autobiography of a young girl's coming of age. The story is set in Bansaw in Anglophone Cameroon. In addition, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, published Nsanda Eba's bildungsroman *The Good Foot* in 1977, seven years after it was written (Eba interview). However, only works published by multinational publishers were effectively disseminated in this period and even today.

To earn money and fame as a writer one had to publish with one of these multi-nationals, such as Heinemann, Fontana, or Macmillan. Some aspiring Anglophone writers sent their manuscripts abroad, but the outcome was not always favorable due to the problems of publishing far from their home base. One such writer was Linus Asong. His correspondence with Heinemann and Fontana Paperbacks exemplifies some of the problems Anglophone Cameroonians encountered with foreign publishers.

By 1975 Linus Asong, a secondary school teacher at the time, had written two novels, *Crown of Thorns* and *Stranger in His Homeland*, which he previously titled *Still-Born* and *Outside Forces*. Asong sent these works to Heinemann Educational Publishers in London. On 17 March 1976 he received a reply from Heinemann. The letter, signed by Elizabeth Ledermann and James Currey, reads: "Dear Mr. Asong, I am afraid that our readers feel that *A Stranger in His Homeland* is rather too long. [...] We should be willing to reconsider it in a shortened version." Apparently Mr. Asong continued negotiating on *A Stranger in His Homeland*. In another letter dated 30

September 1977, James Currey, the then editor of the African Writers Series, wrote:

We've had quite a warm reaction to *Crown of Thorns*. I am airmailing it to our East African company for further assessment. We only do this on a small proportion of manuscripts we receive. We have spent so much time considering *A Stranger in His Homeland* which was previously *Still-Born* and *Outside Forces* that we cannot consider it further until we have made up our minds about the more promising *Crown of Thorns*.

However, by 29 April 1978, Asong had not received Heinemann's verdict on *Crown of Thorns*, so he wrote to Heinemann again. James Curry replied in a letter dated 8 June 1978:

I am sorry not to have replied before to your letter of 29th April 1978 but our East African office has found it difficult to extract a report from their advisers on your manuscript *The Crown of Thorns*. However they have now done so and Mr. Laban Erapu will be able to bring their reactions when he visits London at the end of June.

I apologise for the delay but I hope to be able to give you our decision after discussions with Mr. Erapu within the next few weeks.

One wonders why the East African office found it difficult to "extract a report" from their advisers. The communications with Heinemann continued but in the end none of Asong's works were published. Asong had also sent the manuscript of *Crown of Thorns* to Fontana Paperbacks, also based in London. Fontana sent the following reply in a letter dated 28 February 1977, signed by Carolyn Caughey:

Dear Mr. Asong, I was very impressed with *The Crown of Thorns* and I think there's an excellent chance that we will want to publish it, but I must consult first with our Nigerian associates. I am sending the manuscript today and I hope that I will have further news for you within a month or two.

The Nigerian branch of Fontana appreciated the high quality of Asong's work, but after much correspondence with Fontana the books were still not published on the basis of limited finances. In

the absence of a viable indigenous publisher Asong gave up, put his manuscripts in his drawer, and waited for the day when he could open his own publishing firm (Asong, personal interview). This he did in 1990. He has since published *Crown of Thorns* (1990) and *A Stranger in His Own Homeland* (1993), almost twenty years after they were written.

Asong's experiences show the problems that aspiring Anglophone Cameroon writers faced with foreign publishers like Heinemann and Fontana. Heinemann and Fontana never had a problem with Asong's quality of writing. The fact that Asong's works had to be judged far from his primary audience base was a problem. Although Heinemann and Fontana had African representatives they were not from Anglophone Cameroon; this created a cultural distance between Anglophone Cameroon writers and the publishers. The Heinemann East African Bureau could more readily support a book written by an East African than one written by an Anglophone Cameroonian. To illustrate this point, the fact that 50 percent of the first twenty titles on the African Writers Series were written by Ibos from Nigeria was not unconnected to the fact that Achebe, the editor of the series during its first ten years, was an Ibo. As Griswold reports, "Of the fifteen Nigerian novelists published in AWS before 1980, only five were not Igbo" (62). There was a cultural proximity between Achebe and the Ibo writers, regardless of their outstanding creative ability.

The distance of the foreign publisher was not only cultural, it was physical. In the case of Heinemann, while Achebe was editor he was based in Nigeria, and all the manuscripts were sent to him from London to read. When James Currey became editor after Achebe, he further complicated the system of selecting manuscripts in an attempt at broad-based decision-making. All the short-listed manuscripts were sent to all three companies (agencies) of Heinemann Educational Books (Unwin and Currey 5-6). This system, meant to put the series in touch with its market, proved tortuous. From Asong's correspondence, one finds that after more than two years Asong's manuscript had moved only from the London office to the eastern bureau office, and had yet to make it back to the London office for the final verdict. This period of waiting could be very discouraging to a creative writer.

Another pitfall of the Heinemann publishers was its reliance on the textbook market and the impact this had on editorial policy.

The editors demanded that the novels be short; Asong's *A Stranger in His Homeland* was more than three hundred pages. Books in the African Writers Series ranged between one hundred and fifty to two hundred pages. Heinemann claimed this had to do with cost so that students could afford the texts, but this ended up affecting creativity since some of the works could not be shortened without weakening the story.

Therefore, only a few African writers actually published with the big multinational publishers. Also, because of the educational systems in African countries that relied on these books the writers were quickly canonized, making it difficult for new writers to be published or disseminated. Among these lucky few were Francophone Cameroonians Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono. To sustain the African Writers Series, Heinemann shopped for Francophone African writers who were based in Paris and had produced well-written works in French. Because of the French colonial policy of assimilation, writers from former French colonies found their way in print first before their Anglophone counterparts. There was already a vibrant African literary community in Paris in the sixties that had developed from the Negritude tradition and was creating a dynamic black aesthetic. The works translated included Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (*Houseboy*) and Mongo Beti's *Mission Terminée* (*Mission to Kala*), which have erroneously been considered by some readers as written by English-speaking Cameroonians. In fact, due to the widespread use of English, these works are disseminated more widely in their English translations.

When Heinemann finally published an Anglophone Cameroonian it was Kenjo Wan Jumbam,^v not Asong. Jumbam was a postgraduate student at the University of Leeds in England when he sent his first manuscript, a love story, to Heinemann. It was rejected, but Jumbam continued writing. He had been writing for five years when Heinemann accepted his *Lukong and the Leopard with The White Man of Cattle* for young readers in 1975. Arnold describes this volume as "an unassuming pair of beautifully told tales in unnoticeably contrived folk style [...] intended for secondary students but a pleasure for all ages" (Arnold, "preface" 508). Then in 1980 Jumbam's *The White Man of God* was published in the African Writers Series. *The White Man of God* records the coming of age of Tansa as he faces the complexities of Christianity,

especially the concept of a loving God (father) who can send his children to hell. In the early eighties Arnold commented that “Jumbam is a writer of international stature and will certainly be widely known before long” (Arnold “preface” 508). Unfortunately the reduced activities of Heinemann on the continent and the difficulties of publishing in Cameroon have left Jumbam with many unpublished manuscripts. His most recent unpublished manuscript, written in 2002, is titled *Limbe Camp*. In his opinion it surpasses *The White Man of God* (Jumbam, e-mail interview). Anglophone Cameroonians were also published by other foreign publishers, although the number is negligible. For example, Longman published Comfort Ashu’s *Ayamoh’s Days at School*; Mokoso Ndeley’s *Man Pass Man* in 1987; and *Balafon*, the first Anglophone literature anthology. Macmillan published Maurice Sotabinda’s *Life is a Lottery* and the *Money Doublers* in their Pacesetters series, while Ngonwikwo published *Taboo Love* with Exposition Press in New York.

Indigenous Cameroon Publishers

The problems of publishing abroad were highlighted by the absence of publishing houses and other infrastructures that promoted a viable literary culture in Anglophone Cameroon. Administered as part of the Eastern Nigeria Province by the British, the region’s educational system was greatly neglected, as seen in the previous chapter. At the time that West Cameroon gained independence by joining the newly independent East Cameroon, it had only three secondary schools, few teacher-training colleges, and no university. The federal university established in Yaounde in 1962 continues to be principally a French university.

In 1963, two years after Southern Cameroons and The Republic of Cameroon merged to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the publishing house Editions CLE was born. Editions CLE was an initiative of the Protestant churches in Africa. This initiative benefited from the support of Dutch and Protestant churches, with powerful recommendations from different ecumenical bodies. Headquartered in Yaounde, Cameroon, Editions CLE set the goal of “promoting, developing and disseminating the African cultural patrimony and Christian thinking

by Africans on Africa” (Dihang 129). After its first ten years Edition CLE had progressed from publishing one text in 1963 to thirty texts annually in 1972 and 1973. Editions CLE published texts from all over Francophone Africa, but Cameroonian authors formed 50 percent of the works published. This confirms that productivity increases when the publisher and authors share the same physical and cultural environment. However, since Editions CLE catered principally to a Francophone audience, they did not publish works in English. Nevertheless, Editions CLE published Maimo’s second work, the drama *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer*, in 1968. This play continues Maimo’s theme of conflict between tradition and modernity explored in *I am Vindicated*, but this time African traditions triumph over Western values. Maimo explains that the publishing of his play by Editions CLE was “a matter of chance.” As the premier editor of ABBIA (Cameroon’s first bilingual literary review) published by Editions CLE, Maimo had the opportunity to work with the then manager of Editions CLE who took an interest in his work. When the manager read *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer*, he decided to publish it (Maimo, e-mail interview). Therefore this was not a typical Editions CLE production, Editions CLE just served as printer. The play was a mimeograph, although it carried the Editions CLE logo for drama texts, “CLE Theatre.” Consequently the publication of *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* did not pave the way for publications in English. It remained a lone venture while Edition CLE continued to launch the careers of many Francophone writers who became prominent, including Guillaume Oyono Mbia, Francis Bebey, and Bernard Dadié. Anglophones continued to look for avenues to publish their works. Nonetheless, *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* became a recommended text at the University of Yaounde for several years.

Consequently to talk about publishing or where Anglophone writers have published, I agree with Arnold that “we must be willing to relax the strict sense of the term publish” (“Preface” 503). In order to make their works known, budding Anglophone writers read their poems on radio during literary programs like Buma Kor’s *Young Writers’ Forum* broadcast on Radio Buea in the ’70s. Others like Vincent Nchami were writing stories for BBC by 1949. Nchami ended up selling about twenty stories but never succeeded in publishing any (Arnold, “Preface” 505). Some writers also took their works, particularly poems and short stories, to

newspapers and literary reviews for publication. The bilingual journal *Abbia*, launched in 1963 and edited by Bernard Fonlon, gave many writers their first serious outlet in print. These writers included Abety, Mbeboh, Jumbam, Kor, and Butake. In 1979 Bole Butake launched *The Mould*, a magazine of creative writing, at the University of Yaounde. *The Mould* was printed as a mimeograph, and about 100 to 150 copies were reproduced. Edited and sponsored by Butake, the magazine printed short stories, poems, interviews with writers, and literary analysis by critics. It was a major literary outlet for Anglophones, especially budding student writers. One of them, Juliana Abbenyi, has published a collection of short stories, *Your Madness Not Mine*, and *The sacred Door and other short stories* with Ohio University Press. Unfortunately *The Mould* folded after seven editions when Butake could no longer afford it (Butake, 11 March 2003).

Butake also edited and printed the mimeograph *Thunder on the Mountain*, a collection of poems. It was done on stencil and cyclostyled at the University of Yaounde. *Thunder on the Mountain* was comprised of poems that had appeared in *The Mould* and *Abbia*. Unfortunately, works in mimeograph formats and in newspapers are easily lost without a literary archive to preserve them for posterity. As a result, most of this early literature is unavailable in Cameroon. Indeed, Butake reports that by 1984 he no longer had a copy of *Thunder on the Mountain*, fortunately a clerk in University of Yaounde's Department of Geography, where the collection of poems was typed and cyclostyled, brought him a forgotten copy in 2000, now treasured in Butake's home library. Some of these early works, particularly poems and short stories, were published by Longman in the first anthology of Anglophone Cameroon literature titled *Balafon*. This volume includes Peter Abety's "The Rightful Heir" and Butake's "The Way of the City," both short stories. It also contains poems by Kitts Mbeboh, Meshack Takere, and Victor Tarkang, drama excerpts from Sankie Maimo's *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* and Elame Victor Musinga's *Mr. No-Balance*, and novel excerpts from Ngonwkwuo's *Taboo Love*, Kenjo Jumbam's *The White Man of God*, and Nsanda Eba's *The Good Foot*. The anthology also includes critical essays by Talla Kashim, Bernard Fonlon, and Ojong Ayuk.

Preserving and stocking national literature is not yet happening in Cameroon, where the creation of a national library and its

regional branches is yet to materialize although a central service at the Ministry of Culture is in charge of the National Library and public reading. It is only in 2001 that the prime minister signed the texts of application for Law No 2000/05 on 17 April 2001, relating to legal deposit. This law requires six copies of all published works of art, including graphic art and photography, to be deposited at the National Library on the first day that they are made available to the public (Wirsiy and Shafack). Unfortunately, in the absence of an actual National Library this law has no impact and does very little to change the situation.

With the establishment of the state-owned CEPER, which was created from the former UNESCO print office and Société de Presse et d'édition du Cameroun (SOPECAM), new publishing opportunities opened for Cameroonians. But these state-owned publishing outfits were more printers than publishers. As sub publishers, they reissued local editions of some titles from Heinemann's African Writers Series, which decreased the price for Cameroonians. For example, Ngugi's *The River Between* sold for 335CFA instead of about 1500CFA (Kotei, "Book" 93). However writers had to pay up front for their works to be printed. According to Bole Butake, writers usually took their typed manuscript to CEPER, where it was typeset, mounted manually, and printed. No one read the work at CEPER or SOPECAM (Butake, telephone interview). Works printed by CEPER include Bole Butake's *Rape of Michelle*, Gahlia Gwangwa'a's collection of poems, and Takere Meshack's Kingfisher poetry series. SOPECAM also printed Butake's *Survivors*, Muffuh Benedicta's play *The Rebel*, and Sankie Maimo's *Succession in Sarkov*. *Succession in Sarkov* became a bestseller in Cameroon when the Fon of Nso, Ngah Binfon II, died under very mysterious circumstances just like the Fon in *Succession in Sarkov*. Consequently, many people bought the book out of curiosity, believing that the death of the Fon had been predicted (Maimo, personal interview). A 1988 televised version of the play acted by the Flame Players was screened several times on the national television station in Cameroon, adding to the popularity of the play.

Furthermore, the few Anglophones who went into literary publishing were actually writers with no prospects for publication of their works, so they created "publishing houses." Most of these publishers belong to the category popularly known as "shoestring"

publishers. The author is usually the publisher and bookseller. Sankie's Cowrie publishers is an example of this. Originally Cowrie Publishers was an idea that emanated from the success of *The Mould*, the literary magazine edited by Bole Butake. The overwhelming number of manuscripts received by *The Mould* revealed the tragic void created by the absence of an English-speaking publisher. Hence Butake and others, working closely with Sankie Maimo decided to set up Cowrie publishers, but along the way the others dropped out and it ended up being Maimo's lone venture. Under Cowrie publishers, Sankie published his *Twilight Echoes*, a collection of poems, and *The Mask*, a drama.

Bet & CO. Ltd., established in 1986, was another attempt to fill the Anglophone publishing void. Again, the term *publishing* is used here with reservations. The acronym "Bet" actually stands for Butake, Eyoh, and Tallah, three creative writers and university lecturers teaching at the time at the University of Yaounde. This was no publishing company as such. The working idea as revealed by Butake was that when each of the founders had a book to publish, he funded the printing under the name Bet and Co Ltd., hoping that some day with funds from government subventions or foreign aid, a real publishing house would be put in place (Butake, telephone Interview). In this manner Bet & Co "published" Butake's *Lake God*, a play inspired by the Cameroon Lake Nyos disaster that killed 1700 people, Ndumbe Eyoh's *Munyenge*, a play for children; and *The Inheritance*. Without government subventions and due to the high cost of materials, most of these attempts in indigenous publishing only survived a few publications. Cowrie publishers folded and Bet & Co Ltd. ceased to exist in 1993 as the founders experimented with other publishing opportunities. The result is that most Anglophone Cameroon writers have had to pay to publish their own work, and "royalty" is a word they have yet to deal with except when their works are adopted for the school curriculum.

One Anglophone publisher who has maintained some form of publishing over the years is Buma Kor. He has refused to close his publishing house despite difficulties. He also combines the activities of author, printer, and bookseller. Buma Kor's resilience may come from his close associations with the beginnings of written Anglophone Cameroon literature. There was little organized literary activity in Anglophone Cameroon in 1970, when

Buma Kor created the Drama and Speech Performer's Society as part of the activities of the Presbyterian Youth Center in Victoria. This drama group, encouraged by Mr. Primo Bursik, a German fraternal worker with the Presbyterian mission, presented the first performance of Maimo's *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* (Kor, "The Literature" 71). Also, as an Anglophone representative for APEC (National Association of Cameroon Poets and Writers in its French acronym), Kor had the task of organizing the region's literary talent. He ran the radio program *Young Writers' Forum* on Radio Buea, the only radio station at the time in Anglophone Cameroon. In order to get writers for the program Kor visited several schools in the Anglophone region and explained the role of APEC and encouraged young writers. With the help of education officers, Kor organized a writers' and artists' workshop that met twice monthly at the Baptist Teachers Training Center in Buea (71). The result of these workshops was the first exhibition of Anglophone Cameroon writing during the first agro-pastoral show in Buea in 1973. During the exhibition a twenty-page stapled mimeograph, which can rightly be termed the first bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon literature, with names of writers and titles of their works was handed out (Buma Kor, personal interview). This mimeograph is now unavailable in Cameroon; Arnold reports, "The U.S. Library of Congress threw out the copy it had by some miracle obtained" ("Preface" 503).

Probably inundated with manuscripts from the *Young Writers' Forum*, Kor felt the urgent need of a publishing house. He attended a publishing course with Daystar Publishers of Ibadan, Nigeria; on his return home he had some in-service training with Presbook in Victoria (now Limbe). In 1974 he established his publishing house under his own name. He was able to publish a few books, including a second edition of *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer*; a second edition of Fonlon's *The Genuine Intellectual*; Rene Philombe's *Tales from My Hut*, translated by Richard Bjornson; and Buma Kor's own collection of verse, *Searchlight Poems*. As the economic crisis of the mid-eighties loomed in Africa, Buma Kor published very little, but he refused to close his publishing house. In the 1990s he picked up steam again, this time with the ambition of starting a Cameroon Writers Series in English. There was a great deal of groundwork done for this series, and Bole Butake was selected as the editor in chief. Buma Kor arranged for the printing to be done in South Africa so as to

achieve good quality. In an e-mail to Charles Larson regarding the publication of Larson's book *The Ordeal of the African Writer*, Buma Kor reported that print runs for the titles had been 3000 copies, but he was hoping that two of the titles would be adopted as school texts, which would lead to 10,000 copies being printed. Kor hoped that a novel by Alobwede D'Epie, *Daughter of the Upstream Python*, would reach 30,000 copies. (qtd. in Larson 108). However, my discussions with Buma Kor in January 2003 revealed that, due to undercapitalization, these projects did not take off as envisaged. Even *Zingraff and the Battle of Mankon*, a play successfully staged in Cameroon on several occasions and slated for publication by Buma Kor, could not be published and the authors Butake and Doho were forced to take it to another publisher, the relatively new Patron Publishers in Bamenda.

Buma Kor is currently secretary general of Africa Book Development (ABD), created in 1996. This is "a non-profit organization with a regional character to fulfill a continent-wide need to revive a long-term goal of UNESCO to create Book Development Councils in African Countries as coordinating bodies for promoting national book strategies" (Kor, "Booklinks"). ABD believes that the problem of publishing in Africa cannot be solved without the participation of African governments; hence ABD was set up as a lobbying body to public authorities to establish decisive book policies and also to carry out national book strategies in individual countries. With the support of UNESCO, ABD organized a one-day discussion on book development in Cameroon on 16 January 2002. Following the success of this discussion, the Ministry of Culture organized a forum on books and reading on 10-12 April 2002 at the Yaounde Conference Center. This forum had the objective of "defining a national book policy and national sectoral strategies for inter-professional cooperation and an integrated approach to book promotion and reading in Cameroon" (Kor, "Booklinks"). However, while looking into means and ways of raising the necessary capital to continue publishing books, Buma Kor has launched a Christian newspaper called *The Christian Times*. Buma Kor, the man and his publishing house, have become a symbol of Anglophone Cameroon literature, exemplifying a will to survive despite enormous odds.

It is this same will that characterizes Patron Publishing House (PPH) in Bamenda. Launched in 1990, it is another author-printer

venture, owned by the prolific Anglophone Cameroon novelist, Linus Asong. In an interview with the writer, Asong stated that PPH aims to publish prose, poetry, and drama with the goal of publishing “the best” in Anglophone writing. Although Patron Publishing House is a one-man venture, Asong makes use of external readers. At least three readers read a manuscript for a 25,000 FRS (CFA) fee per script. Approval by two readers is enough for the script to be considered for publication. Despite the cost of publishing, Asong has succeeded in bringing out more than thirty-five titles. His own writing accounts for six of these titles. Titles published by PPH are funded in three different ways. A writer whose manuscript is chosen for publication pays for the entire process of publishing and does his own distribution. The writer can also partially pay for the cost of printing and share the profit with the publishers; or PPH bears the entire cost, distributes the work, and then pays royalties to the writer. So far most of the writers published have had to pay for their works.

Furthermore, PPH publishes five hundred print runs for each of their books. Decisions on print runs by publishers or writers in Cameroon are based mainly on cost rather than the size of the reading public. However, Asong’s greatest challenge as a publisher is balancing profit and quality. There are writers who can pay for their work to be published even if the work is not of publishable quality, and there are writers who have good scripts but cannot be published because PPH cannot finance them. PPH also suffers from a lack of adequate personnel. After the death of his closest collaborator, Langha Kizito, Asong has found it difficult to combine university teaching (at Ecole Normale Supérieure, Annexe Bambili) and publishing. Yet he believes that so far he has been able to balance quality and profit (personal Interview). As Dessaur notes:

The true publisher moves with equal comfort in the world of mind and art and in the world of commerce. This may not be a common personality combination; in fact it is probably rare. But it appears to be an indispensable prerequisite for achievement in book publishing. Publishers who consistently disrespect the demands for quality and worth for manuscripts they publish will despite temporary successes, find their enterprises dying spiritual starvation in the end; just as publishers who consistently ignore the commercial need of

their establishment will find before long that cultural opportunities are negated by bankruptcy (37).

Asong strives to be a true publisher. He claims that PPH sales are good and he is comfortable with the quality of creativity in the works published. How long his enterprise will last is yet to be seen.

To add to Asong's activities, Editions CLE, after close to thirty years, decided to publish literature in English. This new decision was launched with a publication of Butake's collection of plays, *Lake God and Other Plays*, in 1999. This volume contains Butake's earlier published plays and two new plays, *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*, and *Dance of Vampires*, which had not been published before. Editions CLE has also published Bate Besong's *Change Waka and His Man Sawa Boy*, and Anne Tanyi Tang's *Eneta versus Elimo* and *Ewa and Other Plays*. Butake's collection of plays and Tanyi-Tang's *Ewa and Other Plays* are on the secondary school syllabus. Editions CLE pays royalties for the books at the end of each school year. Although Walter Bgoya declares that nothing is being published by Editions CLE "nowadays" (77), referring to the drop in fiction publishing in French, something is actually coming from Editions CLE "nowadays" in English. In fact, Edition Cle published John Nong Kum's 2006 collection of poetry *Walls of Agony* which won the 2007 Bate Besong award for poetry organized by EduArt Inc. USA. In addition, Nooremac Press, the oldest Anglophone publishing house owned by S. N. Tita that specializes in textbook publishing, has since the mid-eighties published a few Anglophone literary texts. Recently, Design House owned by Che Tita, son of S.N. Tita, has also provided a new avenue for Anglophone writers.

Moreover, Langaa publishers located in Buea and Bamenda is giving Anglophone Cameroon writers a reason to be hopeful. Indeed, Langaa is now the leading publisher of Anglophone Cameroon literature with over fifty books to its credit. According to Francis Nyamnjoh one of the ten founding members "Langaa is a research and publishing centre with a mission of bringing greater visibility to African (especially Cameroonian) scholarship and creative writing, mainly in the English language." (Nyamnjoh email interview). Langaa is nonprofit making and is financed mainly through contributions from its founding members and volunteers. In terms of editorial policy, "It benefits from editorial guidance by

outstanding scholars familiar with the Cameroonian and African context, and systematically reviews all manuscripts before decision on publication. All peer review and reader reports are stored as evidence of the credibility of its processes” (Nyamnjoh, email interview).

Furthermore, print-on-demand and self-publishing houses in the United States like IUniverse, Author House and Lulu.com have also increased publishing opportunities for Anglophone Cameroon writers. Furthermore, the internet is greatly enhancing the visibility of Anglophone Cameroon writing as some writers have taken advantage of this medium to showcase their writing to the world. This effort has been facilitated for the most part by JimbiMedia. Founded by Dibussi Tande and Emil Mondo, Jimbi Media creates free weblogs to promote Anglophone Cameroon writers in particular. Through Jimbi Media, Bate Besong and Francis Nyamnjoh have full blogs – www.batebesong.com and www.nyamnjoh.com – which have become portals and online repositories for their creative and critical writing. The reputation and international visibility of these two writers have been greatly enhanced by their presence on the World Wide Web. Additional writers with weblogs include, Gahlia Gwan’gwa, <http://gahliagwangwaa.com/>; Bernice Angoh, <http://www.lemonadestreet.net/>; and Dorothy Atabong, <http://www.dorothyatabong.com/pokaya.htm>. Moreover, Dibussi Tande has also created a general blog for Cameroon literature in English, <http://anglocamlit.blogspot.com>. This site displays the jackets of texts including reviews and blurbs. All these blogs enhance and promote visibility of Anglophone Cameroon literature.

As a result of advances in print-on-demand technology and the Internet, publishing and promotion opportunities are opening up for Anglophone Cameroon writers, although they are still largely underserved inside Cameroon. As Arnold argues,

If the creation of fictions is a genetically human characteristic, a feature of modern, technological and urban human societies is the creation of written literature which depends on reading [...] from whatever cause it may stem, the lack of literary infrastructure in Anglophone Cameroon can be called a systemic denial of Anglophone Cameroonian’s basic rights to create and consume written fictions and not to be left in the

anomalous situation of being well along the path yet still primarily an oral culture where fictions are concerned (45).

Despite the handicap in literary infrastructures, Anglophone writers who make it to print compete favorably with other Anglophone African writers. For example, with no prize to win in his own country, Bate Besong won the coveted Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) award in drama for his play *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* in 1994. For a non-Nigerian to win a literary award in a country like Nigeria, the home of outstanding literary artists in Africa, is a feat worth commending. In 1992 Bole Butake for his plays *The Survivors* and Tanla Kinshani for his poetry collection *Konglanjo* were short-listed for the same prize in the drama and poetry categories, respectively (Ngwane 26). The *Encyclopedia of African Literature*, published in 2003 by Simon Gikandi, includes Anglophone Cameroon writers Bole Butake and Bate Besong. In addition, with the establishment of the University of Buea, the only university in Anglophone Cameroon out of six in the entire country, there is hope for the future of literary creativity and publishing. The university not only offers a course in publishing, it also provides an all-Anglophone academic environment for Anglophone students, which engenders a sense of identity necessary for meaningful creativity. According to publishers like Asong and Bumar Kor, the high number of manuscripts they receive proves that Anglophone Cameroon does not lack writers. This was evident even when Guinness Cameroon organized a writing competition in 1978. The results of the contest were overwhelming. Some of the writers who won in this competition, like Butake and Asong, have since established themselves as accomplished writers (see Arnold's "Orphans of the Commonwealth").

Publishing relies mainly on imported material; without government subventions most writers have to pay from their pockets to get their works published, an investment which is practically impossible for most aspiring writers. Consequently, Anglophone publishers are caught up in a "no-win" situation. They should be able to take advantage of the vacuum created by the restricted flow of imported books, but this is not possible because of the huge costs involved in importing the materials necessary to publish locally. The demand for locally produced books is there,

but it cannot be met. Hans Zell rightly confirms, “A viable indigenous publishing industry that can produce books on a scale that matches local needs, sadly, is still largely a dream in most parts of the continent” (370).

In 1986 Richard Bjornson published a bibliography of Cameroon literature in the journal *Research in African Literatures*; and 90 percent of the entries for literature by Anglophone writers were unpublished manuscripts. The bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon writers at the end of this book reveals that some of these unpublished manuscripts have been published while others are still pending. However, publishing the text is just the beginning of the dissemination process. The next hurdle facing publishers and writers is how to get the published works into the hands of potential readers.

Distribution: Bookstores and Libraries

Bookstores and libraries are vital elements of the book chain. They are established intermediaries through which readers can get the books they desire. In a healthy literary environment these intermediaries boost reading through publicizing the materials they own and stocking items readers are interested in. Libraries and bookshops usually get their books from wholesale booksellers or directly from the publisher.

In Anglophone Cameroon, the most established bookseller is Presbook. Presbook is owned by the Presbyterian mission and is therefore relatively stable financially. Presbook is a wholesale bookseller, especially for textbooks on the primary and secondary school curriculum. Since Presbook is a sister branch of the Presbyterian Printing Press, they also get wholesale distribution of the books printed by Presbyterian Printing Press. However, most publishers of Anglophone literature publish on a very small scale and as such they arrange for their own distribution individually. This entails placing their books in bookshops of their choice, usually on a 20 percent commission basis. The publishers also sell the books directly to the public. Where books have an official launching, a good number are sold. Most books by PPH are officially launched in a ceremony where the community shows their support by buying the books above cost price. Therefore stocking a bookshop depends largely on the financial means of the bookshop

owner. In Cameroon most bookshops are individually owned and located in one town, with no branches in other towns. An exception is Presbook, which has branches in major towns in Cameroon.

In January 2003 and June 2008 I visited many bookshops in Anglophone Cameroon to examine their holdings in Anglophone Cameroon literature. The findings left much to be desired. If the text was on the school syllabus, it was likely to be found in a bookshop, particularly in September at the beginning of the school year. In Bamenda, the most populated Anglophone town, Commercial Avenue housed many bookshops. Most of them were individually owned and looked deserted, apart from a few stationery items and textbooks. At Oxford Bookshop, the representative of Oxford University Press, the shelves were half-empty and a lone glass cupboard at the entrance displayed some Oxford dictionaries and a few science textbooks published by Oxford University Press. My request for literature texts produced two worn-out copies of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Adjacent to Oxford Bookshop was Universal Bookshop, which had since ceased to be a bookshop but still bore the name. It housed a tailoring unit of women sewing traditional dresses. Across the street from Universal Bookshop was another imposing bookshop; here my request for Anglophone Cameroon literature resulted in a twenty-minute search that produced one copy of *Konglanjo*, a collection of poems published in 1988 by Tanla Kishani.

With the establishment of the University of Buea, South West province, many bookshops mushroomed around the Molyko area where the university is located. Most of these bookshops, like Ngassa Bros. Bookshop, sell only textbooks; the few books not on any school syllabus usually have a shelf life of about four years, according to the bookstore owner. Afosi Bookshop, one of the oldest in Buea, carried only ten titles of African literature, none of them by an Anglophone Cameroonian. The proprietor claims that his holdings in this area are small because "they don't sell when not found on the (school) book list." Some of the bookshops, like Pase in Buea and Cosmopen in Yaounde, claim that they usually carry titles of Anglophone Cameroon literature, particularly when the titles are just published and there is publicity for them on the local radio, but after a few years the stock is depleted. Some of the bookstore owners also claimed that the sales of drama texts are

sometimes boosted by public performances. This was the case with Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation* after it was performed by Yaounde University Theater. It follows that most of the bookshop owners do not realize they have to publicize their stock and attract readers. Only Presbook displayed a good number of African literature texts, including texts by major Anglophone writers. Presbook Yaounde carried about twenty titles of Cameroon Anglophone literature. The majority of these, like Butake's *Lake God* and Tanyi-Tang's *Ewa and Other Plays*, were on the secondary school syllabus. However, they also had titles that were not on the syllabus, like *The Last of the Virgins* by Che Atanga George and Asongwed Tah's *Born to Rule*. Usually more spacious and well lit, Presbook shops display a good number of imported books published mainly by Macmillan, Heinemann, Evans, Longman, and so on. One of the series on conspicuous display is the Heinemann "Heartbeat series" for young readers. The near absence of Anglophone Cameroon literature in bookshops indicates that there is a break in the book chain.

Libraries also perform an important role in the dissemination process. School and university libraries usually stock books beyond the school syllabus in order to enrich the curriculum and engender lifelong learning. Libraries also play a role in preserving texts for posterity by archiving important works. In a study carried out by Nwanosike in Anglophone Cameroon secondary schools, it was revealed that most school libraries are shamefully not equipped. "There is no collection development policy" and a "school can choose not to have a library at all" (Nwanosike 113). There is therefore an overwhelming neglect of the essential role a school library plays in the support and enrichment of the curriculum. Since the curriculum in most schools is textbook-driven, students and teachers alike view books that are not in the curriculum as a distraction. Hence school budgets hardly feature library needs. Nevertheless, writers, school alumni, or alumni associations sometimes donate literature texts to schools. For example, during a 1990 celebration of the alumni of Sacred Heart College, Cameroon, Butake, an alumnus organized a performance of his play *And Palm Wine Will Flow* by the Yaounde University Theater. Moved by the performance, a Shesan (alumni of Sacred Heart College), decided to purchase two hundred copies of *And Palm Wine Will Flow* for distribution to secondary school libraries. It is only through

gestures like this that school libraries obtain works written by indigenous writers; otherwise the libraries are usually stocked with donated Western textbooks from U.S. and European charitable organizations. Mrs. Emeline Fodje, officer in charge of the British Council library in Bamenda, confirms this in her 2003 report:

The British Council has a program to encourage reading, especially among primary school children and secondary school students. It is called extensive reading. We give out fiction books to pilot schools and the teachers are trained to encourage the students to read for pleasure. We also have a Book Aid project whereby we get books from Book Aid International UK and distribute them to schools to enable them to have school libraries.

The fiction books donated by the British Council are British books intended to spread British culture, which is one of their missions in Cameroon.

The situation in school libraries is not very different for university libraries. The University of Yaounde library has been heavily neglected for a very long time. As the oldest library, it could serve as a standard but has nothing to offer. In 1992, I conducted a study of this library which revealed that the library depends on foreign book aid. The chief librarian does not sit on the University Senate Council and is hardly aware of new courses that get introduced. Therefore the library is not updated with new books that reflect the current curriculum. According to the statutes of the university, the library is not considered an integral part of the teaching core. It is an auxiliary department together with the computer center. Students use the library only as a reading room. Basic reference tools such as encyclopedias are not current. (See Joyce Ashuntantang's "Subject specialization in academic libraries"). Visits to this library in November 2001 and January 2003 revealed that the library does not have a single text published by an Anglophone Cameroonian, although some writers like Butake are still actively teaching on campus!

The University of Buea, the only Anglophone University in the country, is actually making a difference in librarianship, although it is handicapped by lack of adequate funding. Established in 1993, the library has more than 36,000 book titles and 3000 journal titles. There is a conscious effort to use the means available to support

the curriculum. The library subscribes to journals like *Epasa Moto* (published by the University of Buea), *Callaloo*, *Research in African Literatures*, and *ALA* (African Literature Association) *Bulletin*. The library has a special collection titled “Camerooniana,” which covers books on Cameroon written by both Cameroonians and non-Cameroonians. Although they have not made it a principle to purchase every literary work written by an Anglophone writer, they acquire whatever text is requested depending on their budget. So far their titles on Anglophone Cameroon literature include Lantum’s *Folk Tales from Nso*, Bate Besong’s *Beast of No Nation and Just above Cameroon*, Ngonwikwo’s *Taboo Love*, and Chesami’s *And the People Cried Nkwifor Must Go* (Shafack, e-mail to writer). Although this list is encouraging when one compares it to the total absence of Anglophone Cameroon literature in the University of Yaounde library, it is still far from what is expected of a university library located in Anglophone Cameroon. As Rubin notes, “Libraries cannot prosper when the primary energies and resources of the community are devoted to subsistence; they require a certain commitment of wealth and time” (208). However, there is every indication that with a little more funding the University of Buea library will accomplish more as a dissemination center for Anglophone Cameroon literature and a veritable center for the dissemination of knowledge.

Academic libraries like public libraries play an important role in disseminating books and nurturing the community with relevant literature. In Cameroon there are few government-owned public libraries that cater directly to Anglophones. Limbe, one of the bustling towns in Anglophone Cameroon, runs a government public library that is inadequately stocked, although students use it as a reading room. Limbe inhabitants are excited about the library and wish it had books relevant to their lives. In Buea there is a privately run library called Metropolitan. Here students pay 200CFA per visit or 2.500CFA per month. The library can accommodate about thirty-fourty students at one time and claims to own over 8,000 books and magazines. However most of their collection seems to comprise of books donated from Europe and the USA. Students heavily patronize this library. The government had a public library in Bamenda but closed it in 1995 because it lacked both material and staff. In Bamenda the British Council runs a library, in principle, with the Bamenda Urban Council, but it

is more of a British Council library since they, by and large, fund the library. In 2003, the officer in charge of the library, Mrs. E. Fodje, reported that there are 1,500 registered members of the library and seventy-five people on average use the library each day. In terms of what they read, she explained:

About 70% of our members are students (secondary to university) so they are mainly interested in academic books that would enable them to pass exams. More and more they check out books on computing and fiction (fiction especially during the holidays). The young girls like the fashion magazines like *Vogue*, *She*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Good Housekeeping* while the boys prefer the magazine *Soccer*. The adult members, expatriates, like fiction while Cameroonians like magazines on politics and subject areas of interest (*Economy*, *Appropriate Technology*, *New Statesman*, *New Scientist*, *Tropical Doctor*, *Africa Confidential*, *Geographical*, *Pharmaceutical Journal*, *Computer Weekly*). Most adults use the library when they have to write a paper or when there is a research need, mainly to make money. A few use it routinely to keep up to date with whatever is new in their areas of interest (e-mail to writer, 12 March 2003).

Unfortunately Fodje concludes, "We don't have any books by Cameroonian writers [...] our stock is bought from the UK so these writers need to have published with a British Publisher" (e-mail to writer). Nevertheless, the usage of the British Council library in Bamenda shows that there is a reading population in need of relevant literature. Statistics from the British Council in Bamenda also reveal that Cameroonians enjoy reading serials. This finding confirms my experience in 1993 when I ran a story series titled *Namondo's Diary*, in the *Herald* newspaper. Many Cameroonians bought the paper each week to read the series from the feedback the newspaper received. Therefore, readers seem to be available, but publishers and writers need to find a way of getting their works to the readers.

The British Council library in Yaounde also caters to a good number of Anglophones. On average the library receives 510 people weekly. The librarian, Mr. Nyenty Andrew, reports:

There are several programs at the library to encourage reading especially for children, like "Story Time" for children of primary school age. World Book Day is a yearly event that

encourages reading and publication [...] There are reading competitions where prizes are given to the best readers during our weekly user's forum (e-mail to writer, 14 March 2003).

Again, since the British Council promotes British culture, the books used for "Story Time" and other reading events are British fiction books. However, the British Council Yaounde has promoted Anglophone Cameroon literature, particularly Anglophone drama, by opening its premises to drama rehearsals and theater performances. On the other hand, the American Cultural Center library, which used to act as a public library, has now restricted membership to graduate students and teachers only. However, the cultural center has sponsored some performances of Anglophone Cameroon plays during celebrations like Black History Month. The lack of public libraries is glaring when compared with Nigeria with ninety-two public libraries, Mexico with 2,269 libraries, and Britain with 5,270 libraries (Griswold 107).

Besides distributing at home, Anglophone publishers and writers need to disseminate their works from Cameroon to the world at large. Recognizing the difficulties that indigenous publishers face in disseminating their works out of their home base, nonprofit organizations like APNET (African Publisher's Network) and ABC (African Book Collective) have been created to help indigenous publishers in distribution. APNET was established in 1992. As stated on their Web page, "APNET's mission is the transformation of African Peoples through access to books [...] to strengthen African publishers through networking, training and trade promotion in order to meet Africa's need for quality books relevant to African political, economic and social reality." Asong, the head of Patron Publishing House, is also the vice president of Cameroon Publishers' Association, a member of APNET. Asong attends APNET conferences where he exhibits publications from Cameroon, particularly from his publishing house, PPH. In addition ABC (African Book Collective) was established to fill a distribution void in African publishing. Mary Jay, a senior consultant at ABC explains:

Distribution has long been an obstacle for African publishers, and thus for their authors. While the situation varies from country to country within Africa, nonetheless it is broadly true to say that with the exception of parts of South Africa,

networks and systems for national and intra-African distribution of books remains non-existent. The major obstacles for publishers are lack of access to capital, poor infrastructure, difficulties in communication, and bureaucratic and exchange problems between countries. Added to this is the lack of purchasing power and the few and poorly funded libraries. The bookshop well stocked with local publications and undertaking promotions and marketing is an uncommon phenomenon (119).

Consequently, to fill the distribution void, seventeen founding publishers also established ABC in 1989. ABC aids indigenous publishers by disseminating their work in major English-speaking book markets outside Africa. As a result, African writers are encouraged to publish with indigenous publishers without fear that their works will not be widely disseminated. ABC is the exclusive distributor of English-language titles of its member publishers, with the exception of textbooks. Unfortunately up to 2003 no Anglophone Cameroon publisher was yet a member; Bumar Kor Ltd. and Asong's Patron Publishing House expressed frustration because ABC seemed to have frozen its membership. However, ABC now includes the just created Langaa publishers. Through ABC, books published by Langaa are now distributed in the United Kingdom and the United States. Another growing dissemination outlet for African publishers and writers has been the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF). First organized in 1983 and originally under the Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications, the fair is now run by the Zimbabwe International Book Fair Trust, an independent body. According to Margaret Ling, one of the organizers:

The ZIBF is part of Africa's response to the globalization of publishing and information production itself [...] we are committed to supporting the development of book reading, a book using and a book buying cultural celebration at the cutting edge of book-related policy development in Africa (qtd. in Larson 97).

In 1998, the Fair witnessed "300 direct exhibitors [...] representing 500 publishers...from 50 countries, 19,645 visitors, including 9240 trade and professional visitors during trader's days

and 10,405 members of the public on the public days” (qtd. in Larson 95) These numbers have continued to increase. Some Cameroon writers like Comfort Ashu have attended the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, and Patron Publishing House has been a book exhibitor during the past two Zimbabwe Book International Fairs. The impact of such a meeting ground for all professionals related to the book trade cannot be overemphasized. For Comfort Ashu, the fair gave her the opportunity to publicize her works and also meet pioneer African women writers like Ama Ata Aidoo for the first time (conversation with writer). Such meetings create a sense of community and boost literary creativity.

Furthermore, some privately owned organizations have been helping in distributing African books abroad. One of these is African & Caribbean Imprint Library Services (AILS). Established in 1970, this family-run business distributes African books to readers in the United States. Christopher Boyd, the managing director, reports that by 2003 AILS had acquired 8400 books from Cameroon. Boyd explains that this is done by “an acquisitions agent there (Cameroon), a person who represents the organization directly.” He adds that “sales are good; though mostly to research libraries which maintain African studies collections” (Boyd, e-mail to writer). The most recent listings of AILS acquisitions from Cameroon show a strong representation of books from Patron Publishing House, indicating that Patron is the leading publisher of Anglophone Cameroon literature in Cameroon today. This position is slowly being eroded by Langa publishers but since Langa prints its texts out of Cameroon, they are not readily available in the Cameroon market, a situation Langa hopes to correct in the very near future. Although the number of Anglophone Cameroon literary texts in the AILS collection has not been determined, the holdings of United States libraries of Anglophone Cameroon literature (which have been largely supplied by AILS) show that AILS has distributed most of the published literary texts by Anglophone writers.

I carried out a search in December 2008 using “WorldCat” (World Catalogue) of the Online Computer Libraries Catalogue (OCLC) to find Anglophone Cameroon literature available in U.S. libraries. OCLC has a membership of over 43,559 libraries in over eighty-six countries and territories around the world. Over 90 percent of these libraries are in the United States; thus it is an

extensive search engine. The search was performed using different keywords: “Cameroon and fiction,” “Cameroon and prose,” “Cameroon and drama,” “Cameroon and poetry,” “Cameroon and novel,” “Cameroon and literature.” The search was then limited in each case by language, since the writer only needed works written in English. Since there are some Francophone writers who have published in English or have had their works translated into English, I used my knowledge of the ethnic origins of names in Cameroon to identify Anglophone Cameroon writers. The results of these searches still left out many Anglophone Cameroon writers known to me, so an “author search” of major Anglophone Cameroon writers was carried out. The following table shows a sample of the findings. However, the table does not include literature specifically written for the textbook market, as evidenced in the title. Bitame Lucia’s *Environmental Poems and Nursery Rhymes for Primary School Children* is an example.

Table 4: Distribution of Anglophone Cameroon literature in U.S Libraries

Author	Book Title	Publisher	Libraries that own item in the US
Alembong, Nol	<i>The Passing Wind</i> (1991)	Association of West African Young Writers, Lagos.	11
Asheri, Jedida	<i>Promise</i> (1969)	African Universities Press, Lagos, Nigeria	24
Ashu, Comfort	<i>Ayito and other stories and riddles</i> (1992)	Manson Pub. Nigeria	6
	<i>Nobility differs from wealth</i> (2004)	Vision Educational Publishers	10

Asong, Linus	<i>No way to die (1993)</i>	Patron Publishers, Cameroon	15
	<i>Laughing store: a treasure of entertainment. 1993</i>	“	6
	<i>A legend of the dead (1993)</i>	“	14
	<i>Crown of Thorns (1993)</i>	“	13
Besong, Bate	<i>Change Waka & his man Sawa Boy (2001)</i>	Edition Clé, Cameroon	6
	<i>Beast of No Nation: a docu- drama (1990)</i>	Nooremac Press, Cameroon	3
	<i>Obasinjom warrior: with poems after detention (1991)</i>	Alfresco, Cameroon	11
	<i>The grain of Bobe Ngom Jua: poems (1997)</i>	Kola Tree Press, USA.	4
	<i>Polyphemus detainee and other skulls (1980)</i>	Scholars Press, Nigeria	14
	<i>Just Above Cameroon: Selected Poems 1980-1994.</i>	?	10
	<i>The Banquet: a historical drama</i>	Markurda, Nigeria	11
Bongasu, Tanla	<i>Konglanjo! Or Spears of Love without Ill-fortune. 1988</i>	Univ. of Yaounde, Cameroon	6
Butake, Bole	<i>Thunder on the mountain: an anthology of modern Cameroon Poetry (1979)</i>	Butake, Cameroon	12
	<i>And palm-wine will flow: drama (1990)</i>	SOPECAM, Cameroon	17
	<i>The rape of Michelle (1984)</i>	CEPER, Cameroon	15
	<i>Lake God and other plays (1999)</i>	Edition Clé, Cameroon	11
	<i>Betrothal without libation: drama (1981)</i>	Butake, Cameroon	27
Chi, Abel Shu	<i>Our Riddles and Folk Tales</i>	Chi, Cameroon	7
De La Taille, Werner & Tarkang	<i>Balafon (1986)</i>	Longman, England	9

Doh, Emmanuel	<i>Wading the tide: poems</i>	Kola Tree Press, USA.	9
	<i>Not Yet Damascus (2007)</i>	Langaa, Cameroon.	33
Eyoh, Ndumbe	<i>Munyenge (1990)</i>	BET/Luma Graphics, Cameroon	1
	<i>The inheritance: a play (1993)</i>	BET/Luma Graphics, Cameroon	18
Gwangwa'a, Gahlia	<i>Cry of the destitute: a collection of poems (1995)</i>	Nooremac Press, Limbe, Cameroon	15
Kenjo, Jumbam	<i>Lukong and the leopard, with the white of Cattle (1975)</i>	Heinemann, England	15
	<i>Children's verse and stories (1979)</i>	K. Jumbam, Yaounde, Cameroon	8
	<i>Lynda: a play (1990)</i>	Ngem publications, Cameroon	8
	<i>The White Man of God (1980)</i>	Heinemann, England	259
Kor, Buma	<i>Searchlight: poems (1975)</i>	Freshman books, Victoria	21
Langha, Kizito	<i>Esther (1993)</i>	Patron Publishers	14
Lyonga Nalova(ed)	<i>That Rocky Place (1997)</i>	Paradise Press, Cameroon	6
	<i>That Rocky Place (1996)</i>	"	2
Makuchi	<i>Your madness, not mine: stories of Cameroon (1999)</i>	Ohio University	308
Maimo, Sankie	<i>I am vindicated, including poems from twilight-echoes (1970)</i>	Nendeln, Kraus Reprint	39
	<i>Sov-Mbang: the soothsayer drama (1968)</i>	Edition Clé, Cameroon	48
	<i>The mask: a one act play</i>	Cowrie publications, Cameroon	15
	<i>Adventuring with Jaja (1976)</i>	Yaounde?	19

		Cameroon	
Mbaritang, Henry	<i>The dribblers</i> (1991)	Alpha Computing	6
Muffuh, Benedicta	<i>The rebel: a play of two acts</i> (1980)	SOPECAM, Cameroon	13
Ngongwikwo, Joseph	Taboo Love	Exposition Press, New York.	14
	<i>The Village Schoolgirl</i> , 1985	Nooremac Press, Cameroon.	17
	<i>The Lost Child</i> (1985)	Nooremac Press, Cameroon	13
	<i>The Taboo kingdom</i> (1980-89?)	Nooremac Press	9
Ngome, Epie	<i>What God has Put Asunder</i> (1993)	Pitcher Books, Yaounde	12
Nkemgong, John Nkengasong .	<i>Across the Mongolo</i> (2004)	Spectrum Books, Nigeria	2
	<i>Black Caps and Red Feathers</i> (2001)	Patron Publishers, Cameroon	5
Francis B. Nyamnjoh	<i>A Nose for Money</i> (2006)	East African Educational Publishers, Kenya	78
	<i>Stories from Abakwa</i> (2007)	Langaa, Cameroon	51
	<i>The Travail of Dieudonné</i> (2008)	East African Educational Publishers, Kenya	8
Tabe-Ebob, Ayuk	Cameroon: folk-verse	Jotan printers, Cameroon	13
Takere, Mesack	Kingfisher poetry: man and nature	CEPER, Yaounde, Cameroon	3
	<i>The phoenix</i> (kingfisher Poetry bk.4) 1984	? Yaounde, Cameroon	1
Tande, Dibussi	<i>No Turning Back: Poems of Freedom 1990-93</i>	Langaa, Cameroon	58
Tanyi-Tang,	<i>Ewa and other plays</i> (2000)	Edition Clé,	12

Anne		Cameroon.	
Yenika, Sishu Vivian	<i>Real Mothers</i> (2007)	Iuniverse, USA	1

Source: Established from “WorldCat” OCLC.

The distribution of Anglophone literature in U.S. libraries shows that libraries in the United States acquire most Anglophone literary texts, whether they are published indigenously or not. Also, the distribution pattern does not show a bias for any particular genre or author. However, distribution privileges texts published by well-established publishers like Heinemann and Ohio University Press. For example, *The White Man of God*, published by Heinemann, is found in 259 libraries and Makuchi’s *Your Madness Not Mine* is found in 308 libraries. Although these books are in U.S. libraries, their relatively small quantity shows that they are not heavily taught in schools. As a matter of fact, the ninety-six syllabi received after a 2003 survey on the teaching of African literature in the United States show only two courses, and both of them were surveys of African theater incorporating texts from Anglophone Cameroon. The text in both courses was Bole Butake’s *Lake God*. Since the students could not get a copy from the local bookshops in the United States, the professor, with the help of the university, created a copyrighted mimeograph version. The professor for both courses is an Anglophone Cameroonian. A recent survey in 2008 shows that Anglophone Cameroon literature is increasingly being taught in the United States, but so far this effort has been championed by professors who are originally from Anglophone Cameroon. These professors include Joyce Ashuntantang, Jerry Domatob, Festus Ndeh, Juliana Nfah Abbenyi, and Peter Vakunta. The acquisition of Anglophone Cameroon literary texts by U.S. libraries also confirms that African literature continues to gain ground in the United States with the establishment of African Studies Departments and the inclusion of “World Literature” in English departments. However, the presence of these texts abroad and the relative absence in Cameroon confirms the domination of foreign audiences, is a source of worry for some African critics who feel that this perpetuates the cycle of African writers writing for foreign audiences, thus further distancing African literature from Africans.

Based on the table above with fifty-seven texts, the following table shows the top five libraries in the U.S. with a significant number of Anglophone Cameroon literature texts.

Table 5: Distribution of Anglophone Literature Texts by U.S. Library

United States Library	Number Of Anglophone Literature Texts Owned
Northwestern University Library	41
Indiana University Library	39
Harvard University Library	38
Library of Congress, Washington, DC	35
Columbia Library, New York	27

Source: Established from “World Cat,” OCLC

The table confirms that Anglophone Cameroon literature is mostly available in the United States to students, teachers, and researchers, although a few public libraries, including New York and Boston public libraries, own some copies.

Readers

The final destination of books is readers. The ability to read English in Cameroon, as in most Anglophone African countries, presupposes some formal education in English. Hence a starting point to determine the population of readers is the literacy rate. According to 2002-2004 UNICEF statistics, the literacy rate for Cameroon males is 77 percent and 60 percent for women. This is quite high compared to Ghana, with 66 percent for males and 50 percent for females. Yet these statistics do not give the language of literacy. It is therefore very difficult to get accurate statistics on the number of Cameroonians literate in English. Most studies on English in Anglophone Cameroon concentrate on the social function of the English language and pronunciation. However, with some of the statistics available one can come up with a rough idea of the number of potential readers in Anglophone Cameroon. Most studies on Cameroon put Anglophone Cameroon at 20

percent of the entire Cameroon population. However, instead of basing the math on the general population, I based it on the population eighteen years and above. A majority of this population is likely to have had a secondary education and can read to some extent.

From 2002 UNICEF statistics, the population of Cameroon above eighteen years is 7,257,000. If Anglophones are 20 percent of the Francophone population, then 20 percent of the population above eighteen is 1,451,400. The literacy rate for Cameroon is 83 percent for males and 81 percent for females. Therefore, without the total men-to-women ratio, one can approximate that about 82 percent of the population is literate. Again using the 20 percent mark for Anglophones, 20 percent of 1,451,400 is 1,190,148, which is roughly the number of literate Anglophones. Although Anglophone Cameroonians are put at 20 percent of the entire population, the percentage of those eighteen and above may be higher or lower. Nevertheless, the potential to read does not make a reader. The number of actual readers would thus be lower than the number of potential readers. There have been many references to reading in Africa and there is a general consensus among critics that it is an area that needs to be properly investigated. One of these critics, Kotei, argues, "In countries where less than 30% of the population can read and write there is need for in-depth studies of the sociology of the book and the psychology of reading; on the national level such data should provide guidelines to relevant book production" (148). On his part, Chidi Amuta explains that the writing of literature in Africa preceded a reading culture and by the time a reading culture was being cultivated other information mediums like film and television brought distractions. Amuta therefore asserts, "The active readership of the African novel (literature) is therefore to be located among university teachers and their students, professional men (and women) of culture and certificate-conscious teenagers [...] consequently, the African novel (literature) has remained an aspect of a minority urban elite culture" (81).

It therefore follows that a majority of the readers of Anglophone Cameroon literature are secondary, high school, and university students and their teachers. For this reason, a close look at the literature curriculum would be instructive as to what Anglophone literature texts students are reading. In 1993, the

twenty-nine literature texts recommended for general secondary education included three titles by Anglophone Cameroonians: Eba's *The Good Foot*, Jumbam's *White Man of God*, and Takere's poetry collection (Tambo Leke 38). Tambo Leke decried this representation as inadequate, not just for literature but also for all the other subjects with the exception of history. His position can be understood: since most students only read what is available in school, the Anglophone Cameroon culture can be effectively passed on through textbooks. Thus Leke called on Anglophone writers to also write for the textbook market. (Leke 38). In 2003, Thirteen years after Leke's call, the situation seems to have improved slightly. Out of twenty-nine required texts, there were eight titles written by Anglophone Cameroonians. The list includes Butake's *Lake God and Other Plays*, Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa and Other Plays*, Patrick Mbunwe Samba's *The Poetry Course Book I and Book II*, Jumbam's *The White Man of God*, and Linus Asong's *Crown of Thorns*. This number more than doubled in 2008. The national book list signed on June 11th 2008 by the Minister of Secondary Education, Louis Bapes-Bapes, for the 2008/2009 academic year lists 22 titles by Anglophone Cameroonians out of a total of thirty-four for General Secondary and Grammar education. Some of the new titles on this list include, Tanyi-Tangs, *Eneta vs Elimo*, Butake's *Bethroddal without Libation*, Nkemgongs's *Widow Might*, Ambanasom's *Son of the Native Soil*, Nsailai's *House of the Shadow* and *Modern Cameroon poetry* edited by Emmanuel Fru Doh et al.

In addition, I conducted a survey of African literature courses taught at the university level to see what place Anglophone Cameroon literature has on the university curriculum. The University of Yaounde I and the University of Buea were chosen for this survey. As the oldest university in Cameroon, the University of Yaoundé I has the oldest English department and also has a department of African literature, while the University of Buea is the only Anglophone University in Cameroon. The survey came up with a total of sixteen courses of African literature taught in both universities. There may be more courses, since I did not get feedback from all the African literature teachers at the University of Yaounde. From the sixteen syllabi received, I found that at least one text by an Anglophone writer is included in survey courses like "Survey of African Literature," Comparative Studies in African Literature," and "The African Novel." Although there was still a

heavy presence of courses wrapped around the first generation of African writers like Achebe, Ngugi, and Armah, at the University of Buea there were actually two courses solely on Anglophone Cameroon literature, titled “Cameroon Literature of English Expression” and “Cameroon Literature in English.” This curriculum development is a good boost for Anglophone Cameroon literature and a step in the right direction. From the sixteen university courses sampled, the Anglophone Cameroon authors most frequently taught are Bole Butake, Bate Besong, and Linus Asong.

Consequently one can argue that today Anglophone Cameroonian students are reading their own literature more than they did a few years ago, even though what they are reading is largely inadequate. In contrast, the non-student population hardly reads local literature. I carried out interviews in 2003 with 506 Anglophone Cameroonians (with equal distribution in terms of gender) who admitted to being potential readers. They all had some level of secondary or higher education. Asked whether they had read any Anglophone Cameroon fiction within the preceding one year, 59 percent of them answered “No,” although they had read newspapers and magazines and watched several video films pouring in from neighboring Nigeria including *Potent Secrets*, a video film I co-produced with Ako Abunaw. This confirms Kotei’s assertion that there is an adult reading population in Africa that is neglected. He holds, “Whereas the average African literate in an urban area may read a pamphlet, magazine, or newspaper every day of the week, he may not glance at a book the whole year, except the Bible or the Koran occasionally [...] (“Cultural” 180).

In addition 26 percent of the sampled group were habitual readers of foreign novels by Western writers like Danielle Steel and Stephen King; the majority of these were women. Only 15 percent of those sampled had read any Anglophone Cameroon literature within the past year and it was either because they personally knew the writer who had published the book or in the case of drama, they became interested in the text after watching the play. Asked why they did not read local literature, 40 percent of the total participants complained of the economic crisis that has reduced them to subsistence living. Yet 60 percent claimed that they would like to read Anglophone writers but found the texts difficult to read. Most of the participants complained that writers, especially

poets, couch meaning in difficult words and imagery, but 90 percent of the participants had watched a performance of an Anglophone play by the university theater live or on television and had no problem understanding the performances. In fact, a lawyer in the group reported that he has tried in vain to read some Anglophone Cameroon writers, so each time he feels like reading a novel he finds himself rereading the novels he read in secondary school. He claimed that with maturity he has discovered other layers of meaning that he missed in secondary school. Three of these literary texts that he has reread over six times are Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, and Jumbam's *Lukong and the Leopard with the White Man of Cattle*. The reason that readers may find it difficult to read a drama text but enjoy a performance can be understood, since the performance makes use of visual theatrical devices that clarify meaning. However, the difficulty of understanding written texts may have to do with the teaching and learning of literature in schools. Kole Omotoso confirms this point when he explains, "African readers when dealing with African literature, approach it as something to be studied, crammed, perused, and waded through. It is not to be come to in the natural process of browsing around to find interesting reading material" (257). Besides the issue of the school curriculum, effective reading entails a quiet environment and adequate lighting. Even those who wanted to read found that their greatest distraction was noise and social distractions. Houses are always overcrowded with people and there is always someone wanting to talk or dropping by. In Cameroon, as in most African countries, "the individual shares in the total cultural heritage of his community to the extent that most situations bring him into contact with the group's pattern of thought, behaviour and action. His individuality, that is any desire to pursue individualist behaviour, is submerged in communality" (Kotei, "Book" 150).

A similar survey on reading carried out among 210 Anglophone Cameroonians living in the United States revealed that while 95 percent of them say they do not have time to read a book, all of them were interested in owning copies, hoping that one day they would find time from the "rat race" in America to read. All of those interviewed wanted to know where they could get titles, especially for their children to give them a sense of culture and identity while growing up in the United States. Lack of time was

also an obstacle to reading for Nigerians living abroad, based on Griswold's study (106).

Nevertheless, although the number of potential readers who are actually reading Anglophone Cameroon literature is low, there is a reading culture contrary to what most Anglophone Cameroonians think. According to Griswold, "a reading culture exists where people are in the habit of reading relatively serious books, and when they choose reading over other forms of entertainment" (Griswold 117). Among Anglophone Cameroonians there is a reading culture in students, teachers, journalists, and men and women of letters. These small, urban elite sustain reading in the region while the rest of the population gets instruction and entertainment by participating in oral literature, listening to the radio, and watching television and video films. However, as Griswold points out, "books may be costly, but they are a lot cheaper than VCRs, do not require additional equipment, and are more immune to the vagaries of the electric power supply than other media" (118). This is especially true when one takes into consideration the constant outages of electricity in Cameroon these days. As such, reading literature can still compete effectively with other mediums in informing and entertaining the community. In Anglophone Cameroon the book remains a powerful medium through which writers and readers share their collective struggles, memories, and the will to survive the realities of marginal status.

Chapter Four

Anglophone Cameroon Literature: A Brief Overview

In this chapter I attempt to present an overview of Anglophone Cameroon literature from 1959 to the present by briefly analyzing selected texts. These texts have been selected because of their historical importance to Anglophone Cameroon/African literature, their thematic/stylistic concerns which signify a literary trend and/or their intrinsic worth as examples of engaging literature worthy of wider dissemination. I have utilized postcolonial theory as a frame for these analyses since it allows the reader to experience the texts and their writers within their proper contexts.

The hallmark of African literature lies in the social role of the African writer. This critical stance has been espoused by several African critics including, Achebe (1975), Soyinka (1976) and Amuta (1986). As the authors of the *Empire Writes Back* explain, “this insistence on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience has been one of the most distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetic” (125). Consequently there is a vital link between African literature and the society that produced it. As a result, a proper understanding of Anglophone Cameroon literature must be predicated on an analysis of its specific socio-historical determinants. A careful analysis of the corpus of Anglophone Cameroon literature today reveals three broad phases. In suggesting these demarcations, I am of course conscious of the limitations of an automatic “stagist” theory for a cultural product as polemical, complicated and diffuse as literature. Nonetheless, it is necessary even if only as an organiazational tool.

The First Phase: A clash of Cultures

The first phase covers the period from 1959 to about 1984. In the Republic of Cameroon, this period begins shortly before “the end” of colonialism to the rise of Paul Biya as the second president of Cameroon. The writers during this period like their counter parts elsewhere in Africa, critique the othering of formerly colonized people in texts written by the colonizers. To counteract this marginalization, and as a vital part of the process of decolonization, these texts seek to give voice to the "subaltern" in

order to expose the misrepresentation and negativization so rampant in colonial writings. Consequently one of the major pre-occupation with texts of this period is a representation of the conflicts and tensions resulting from changes introduced by colonial rule and a new Christian world view. During this period the master genre was poetry, followed by the short story, yet most of these were published randomly in magazines and newspapers, as seen in the last chapter. Thus, the major texts of this period are Maimo's *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer*, Jedida Asheri's *Promise*, Kenjo Jumbam's *The White Man of God*, Ngonwikuo's *Taboo Love*, and Nsanda Eba's *The Good Foot*. Asong's novels, such as *A Stranger in his Homeland*, *Crown of Thorns*, and *No Way to Die*, fall in this first phase because they were actually written in the 1970s although they were published twenty years later.

Crown of Thorns is set in the late sixties and early seventies in the Anglophone part of Cameroon, which was a British trust and mandate territory. The British believed in a system of indirect rule; hence they ruled the local population through the Native Administration (N.A.) and a House of Chiefs. As the narrator explains:

The coming of the missionaries was not the people's worry; nevertheless, they found that fact alone unbearable. The Government too had arrived. Small Monje needed a District Officer to replace the defunct N. A. Office, the administrative body that had governed the tribes for generations. It was merely a more elevated title for the Council of Elders (65).

However, after Anglophone Cameroon gained independence by joining French Cameroon, the new nation-state dominated by Francophone Cameroon adopted a system of direct control and the Native Administration was not only replaced by a D.O., but the House of Chiefs was dissolved. The territory was divided into administrative units with a government-appointed official responsible for each unit. The chiefdoms now came under government control. Consequently communities found themselves answering not only to government officials that knew nothing about their customs and traditions, but to remnants of French colonialism practiced by francophone officials who were often arrogant in dealing with the local population, leading to a breakdown in communication between the administration and the

ruled. In the case of the people of Nkokonoko Small Monje, this led to the theft of their god. It is the response of the people to this tragic dislocation of their community from its spiritual base that forms the central focus of this novel.

In *Crown of Thorns*, Asong enters into dialogue with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This inter-textuality is visible in his revision of Achebe's ending to his seminal novel. Nevertheless, Asong's novel can effectively be discussed alongside the early novels of Francophone Cameroon writers like Ferdinand Oyono and Mongo Beti. The novel, divided into three parts, portrays a traditional community, Nkokonoko Small Monje, caught in the cataclysmic wheel of change. The first part opens with the revelation that the god of Small Monje has been stolen and sold to a white man. Suspicion is cast on Achiebefuo, the master carver, and the chief. To steal a people's god is a grievous crime with grave consequences. Part two is a flashback on how Chief Alexander Nchindia reluctantly became chief of Nkokonoko, although it was his brother Nkoaleck who had been raised to become the chief. This flashback reveals the machinations of the district officer, who uses his position to undermine the traditions of the people of Nkokonoko to the extent of forcing on them a chief who has not been trained for the job. The result is an anti-hero who hates his job, does not understand the nature of his office, and enjoys flouting the advice and suggestions of his Council of Elders. Finally, part three returns to the crisis at hand: an investigation to find the culprits who stole the god of Small Monje. Investigations reveal that the district officer, the representative of government in Small Monje, masterminded the sale with the complicity of a few elders and the chief. This is the high point of the people's exasperation with the changes affecting their land due to the activities of the priest, the D.O., and their own brainwashed chief. As Ngobefuo, the most senior member of the Council of Elders explains,

If ever we are to get another god in this tribe, the stump of the god that was left behind by these wicked brothers of ours must be watered with blood. If the blood of the sons of Nkokonoko Small Monje shall spill, then the man who led them, the man whose presence has caused the destruction of everything we were once proud of, shall not be spared (37-38).

In the end, the people under the leadership of the “Okonkwo-like” Ngangbe rise up and brutally kill all these perpetrators. This ending revises the ending of *Things Fall Apart* where the people of Umuofia seem helpless and do not join Okonkwo to fight back. Okonkwo is then forced to commit suicide. This is a most welcome revision for readers who have always considered the ending of *Things fall Apart* one of the novel’s few flaws.

Asong’s style is lucid. The dialogue exudes a certain freshness buttressed by the use of metaphors and proverbs. For example, in discussing the activities of the chief that are not in line with the traditions of the people, the elders explain the situation metaphorically:

Their chief was their house. Their house ought to remain clean always. If a house gets dirty, they clean it. If it gets so infested with vermin that no amount of cleaning will make it fit for human habitation, what do they do? They burn it down and build another one. They had good reason for burning down this particular house [...] they had thought that the excrement in the house was smelling and it had reached a point where they could no longer endure (117).

Asong’s dialogue blends in with his crisp characterization and plot, which shows that Asong is at ease in his literary imagination. Richard Bjornson confirms this view when he states “There is a certain assured confidence in Asong’s handling of plot and characterization that usually goes with maturity and experience. We are not surprised by events and their outcome, we are carefully prepared and everything moves towards an almost inevitable climax of horror” (unpublished review).

Another representative text of the first phase is Prudencia Chila’s novel *Promise* written under the pen name of Jedida Asheri. *Promise* is the first novel published by an Anglophone Cameroonian woman. It was published in 1969 by Lagos African University Press, only three years after Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* and three years before Buchi Emecheta’s first novel *In the Ditch*, yet this novel has remained invisible to the African literary world and beyond. The novel is set in the 1930’s and 40’s in the Bansa area of the grass-field regions in the then British Southern Cameroons and written as an autobiography. In the preface to the story someone with the initials which match the names of the illustrator of the story,

Shirley Ardener, claims that this is a real story but the writer never intended to publish it. Therefore, according to Ardener only the names of the characters have been changed. In *Promise* Jedida Asheri covers the period of her life from seven years till she is in her early twenties. The stories of her childhood are many and deal with conflicting problems, but generally the stories detail a series of losses. Like the young female protagonists in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*, Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb* or Tsitsi Dagarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Jedida's growth is marked by Christianity, colonialism and patriarchy.

As a child Jedida's is brainwashed by Christian missionaries who convince her of the inferiority of indigenous people. This Christian indoctrination imposes a crisis of identity on Jedida who finds it difficult to relate to non Christian members of her extended family. When she visits her aunt in Ropka, she explains that: "the water supply at the village was very bad. Water was taken from a small, very muddy and dirty pond. It was so dirty that a queer smell surrounded it [...] the people themselves were dirty, and had no idea of civilization. Nature is very kind to people who are ignorant" (34). The irony here is that Jedida does not realize that she is the one who is ignorant of her cultural displacement and alienation caused by Christian/western education. Due to this alienation, she finds people in Ropka "uncivilized" as opposed to her home in Kimbaw because Ropka does not yet show visible signs of Western influence. Again, in comparing girls in her school, she explains, "The girls in our school who came from Bamenda were more civilized than we were. We were attracted and made friends with them [...] They also spoke 'pidgin English,' a language we did not know. We learnt this kind of English" (55). Here, being "civilized" also means giving up one's own indigenous language. Jedida's linguistic displacement becomes evident when she and her friend, Alice are asked to teach after finishing standard four. They find themselves incapable of communicating with people with whom they speak the same language. As she puts it, "We had very difficult times teaching [...] we knew little English and could not write Lamsaw." Their Western education that only sanctions written languages cuts them off from Lamsaw; without a good knowledge of English, communication in the classroom breaks down between people who hitherto could communicate fluently. Again, because of this erosion of her traditional values, Jedida learns to put herself

in a binary opposition with the other girls in her community, whom she constantly refers to as “pagan.” Her mother contributes to this Christian/pagan dichotomy by asking her children not to respect the instructions of the Shu Fai, the traditional head of their enlarged family because of his non Christian rituals. The tension generated by Jedida’s Christian/western training is further complicated by patriarchal institutions.

Therefore, in order for Jedida to enter the threshold of maturity, she must be able to assert herself and overcome the two institutions – Christianity (colonialism) and patriarchy that seem to deny her an autonomous identity. First, she criticizes her father for neglecting her siblings who are clothed in rags. Her father takes all the money she earns from working at the mission, yet “nobody knew what he did with it” (21). She also begins to challenge religious authority; she refuses to go to night mass because it is very far and the weather is cold. Her mother, in a symbolic gesture of “gender bonding”, acknowledges her growth as a woman. As Jedida confirms, “Mamma seemed to realize that I was now a big girl. She did not check on me when I came home in the evening. Of course, I went to the farm with her everyday, but when I came back, I washed the dust from my face and feet, and went to see my friends, mostly in the compound” (95). With this acknowledgement of Jedida’s growth, she is now ready to venture out into the world. Her story ends as she leaves for a teacher’s college in Nigeria, a reminder of the neglect of educational needs in Anglophone Cameroon during British rule.

Promise is a very important text not only in Anglophone Cameroon literature but also in African literature in general. By narrating the female gender, Asheri confronts the marginal position inhabited by women in her community who are already forced to endure the margins as colonized entities. Her search for self-determination becomes a search for an autonomous identity and voice; an identity and voice heavily suppressed by the triple bind of Christianity, colonialism and patriarchy. The autobiographical stance of the novel confirms Yvonne Vera's assertion that "the woman writer in Africa is a witness; forgiving the evidence of the eyes, pronouncing her experience with insight, artistry and fertile dexterity" (53) Viewed within the frame work of postcolonial feminist discourse, *Promise* takes its place as an one of the early

pieces of literary resistance to female and colonial oppression by an African woman.

The Second Phase: A response to “Horizontal” colonialism

The second phase of Anglophone Cameroon literature spans the mid-eighties to about 2003. The literature of this period is an imaginative response to the political, social, and economic climate of this time. The economic crisis that hit Africa in the mid-eighties resulted in salary cuts in Cameroon. The bleak economic situation highlighted global political developments toward liberalization and regime changes.

Furthermore, the end of the cold war and the move toward more democratic governments in the former communist nations of Eastern Europe served as a springboard for Cameroonians to ask for reforms. The mood during this period was one of disillusionment, unrest, and a clamor for a people-centered government. As seen in chapter one, this mood led to marginalized groups like Anglophones to ask for more representation. Anglophone Cameroon writers, particularly dramatists, responded imaginatively to the events around them. Cameroon Anglophone literature during this period is thus marked by what Lyonga calls “aesthetics of victimization” (“Le Degré Zero” 158) directed at the Francophone leaders who have victimized Anglophones due to their minority status, and to Anglophone leaders who have forgotten their origins and joined the Francophones in subjecting their own kind to second-class citizenship. For the most part, the writers in this second phase protest what Emmanuel Fru Doh calls “horizontal colonialism.” As Doh argues, “Like African literature (in general) which had to combat colonialism, Anglophone Cameroon literature is faced with a descendant of this monster” (82). Some of these works include Butake’s *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, *Shoes and Four men in Arms*, *Dance of Vampires*; Bate Besong’s *Beast of No Nation* and *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*; Babila Mutia’s *Before this time Yesterday* and Victor Epie Ngome’s *What God has Put Asunder*. During this protest period, the drama genre that was the last to bloom in the first phase became dominant. As Bate Besong explains, “With the wave of democracy that preceded multi-party politics in Cameroon, Anglophone dramatists found themselves

face to face with theater audience of thousands seeking answers to political questions” (14). Butake’s *And Palm Wine will flow* certainly answered one of those questions.

And Palm Wine Will Flow is set in the Fondom of Ewawa. The Fondom is in the grips of a Fon and his council of elders who revel in corruption and alcoholism. Their activities have alienated Shey Ngong, the spiritual leader of the Fondom. The play written in one movement begins and ends at the grove of Shey Ngong where he performs rituals on behalf of the people of Ewawa. The play opens with Shey Ngong performing an incantation but he is interrupted by a voice which tells him that everyone in the village is heading towards the palace to witness Kibanya’s red feather ceremony and as usual there will be a big celebration afterwards and palm wine will flow. The Fon has abused the traditional feather reserved for heroes of the clan by giving it to the highest bidder. Shey Ngong is exasperated with the corruption, drunkenness and greed that have pervaded the Fondom, so he refuses to join what he sees as the madness of the Fon. He tells the voice “my obligation is to the gods of the land. My duty is to the gods. Not the Fon and the palm wine [...] the gorilla can do nothing to the Iroko tree” (10). Exasperated by Shey’s refusal to join the celebration, the Fon seizes farms from Shey’s wives and gives them to Kibayana’s wives. As one of the Fon’s messengers comes to announce the Fon’s pronouncement to Shey, the Earth Goddess mask in the grove is animated and pronounces the coming of a drought, “the sun shines on hills/ the sun shines in the valleys/ the sun shines in the depths of the streams/ the sun shines” (20). Shey asks the messenger to take Earth Goddess’ message back to the Fon.

Events reach a climax in Ewawa when the Fon’s watchdogs beat Nsangong, a respectable elder of the Fondom because he is Shey’s friend. The people abandon their usual drinking spree at the Fon’s palace in protest over this beating. To cleanse the land from these excesses, the Kibaranko goes on a cleansing mission to rid the land of all evil forces including the Fon. He unleashes destruction as he heads for the palace but by the time he gets there the Fon is dragged into a room and the kibaranko splits the Fon’s throne in two, a symbol of the annihilation of the Fon. The Earth goddess finally curses the Fon to death. The people now vow that they don’t want a Fon anymore; Power should not be in the hands of one man but given to a council of elders. However, all the

people are summoned to the market place to discuss the best way to govern the Fandom.

Butake combines western theatrical idioms and different modes of orature-masks, incantation, and proverbs from his Noni tradition to create his dramatic vision. The natural and supernatural live in one continuum of reality. He broadens the scope of his characters by exploiting spirit possession. According to Firth, "Spirit possession is a form of trance in which the actions of a person are interpreted as evidence of control of his behaviour by a spirit normally external to him" (qtd. in Alembong 130). Consequently Kwengong is both the Earth goddess and Shey's first wife. The Tapper also doubles up as Kibarankor. As Bate Besong contends, "without coming to terms with Butake's syncretic imagination using traditional Noni mythic pattern in an otherwise realistic mode, and how it influences his art, it is impossible to apprehend his potential as an Anglophone Cameroon artist" ("Ontogenesis" 7). Butake also makes use of proverbs in establishing conflict in the play. For example, the following set of proverbs pit the Fon against the Shey.

The cockroach does not call a fowl to a wrestling match (10)

The gorilla can do nothing to the iroko tree (10).

The stream never flows uphill. The leopard and the goat

Have never been bed fellows (14)

The rat does not play with the Cat (18)

Shey Ngong's refusal to be part of the Fon's debauchery has put him in open conflict with the Fon. Shey is expected to lose in this conflict, for he is the cockroach who cannot win the fowl (the Fon) in a wrestling match. However, Shey is the spiritual leader of Ewawa, the chief priest of Nyombom, hence he has moral purity unlike the Fon. With this spiritual superiority, he rightly claims to be the Iroko tree, the Leopard and the Cat. Shey is eventually vindicated because at the end, the Fon loses his throne and his life.

And Palm Wine Will Flow predicts the wishes of Cameroonians. By the time the play was published in 1990, there was a clamor for a national conference symbolically presented in Butake's play as a meeting in the market place. Butake projects the victory of the people in a liberation struggle against a government that has lost touch with the aspirations of the governed.

In *Dance of the Vampires*, Butake continues his presentation of a destitute Fon. This time the Fon has become his own prisoner and is held hostage by his military whom he pays exorbitantly to keep them from revolting. The nuances on the name of the monarch, Psaul Roi, cannot be missed. If one takes out the “s”, it becomes Paul and if you take out the P it becomes Saul and in the Bible Saul was Christened Paul. The last name “Roi” means “King” in French. It is easy to see this monarch as Cameroon’s own President Paul Biya.

The play is set in an urban center, the capital city of a fictitious country. The play is not entrenched in any indigenous tradition apart from the vampire cult. Again the main themes here are greed, lust for power and abuse of power. There is a total repression of ideas. The people want to share the power of governance but Psaul Roi is an absolute dictator. They patiently wait for him in the market place but they are dispersed by the military. When the country suffers from an earthquake, the monarch capitalizes on their misery by requesting foreign aid, which he does not give to those affected. The result is a clash between the military and the people, which leads to the people evacuating the country. *Dance of the Vampires* ends like *And palm wine will Flow*: the monarch loses his throne, and is held captive along with his closest collaborator. This time, however, they are taken to the market place where they will be “exposed to the wrath and glowing vengeance of the people they were supposed to serve. They will spend the rest of their days counting their guilt on the faces of their victims; and so measure the consequences of the macabre dance of the vampires.” For Butake, the market thus becomes a symbol of people power, a sort of people’s parliament where everyone is represented and where there is no discrimination. He seems to insist that the people have a right to decide their own fate, and that the destiny of the country should not be placed in the absolute control of one man; power has to be shared and the market place of ideas must be brought to bear on how the people are governed.

Nonetheless, what marks the plays during this period is the style employed by the playwrights. Most of them use metaphor and metonymy as an interface to transmit their dissatisfaction with the political and socio-economic situation in Cameroon. These Anglophone dramatists like Brecht, make use of a distancing effect

by using metaphors and metonymy in a way which at once creates a distance from their audience because they are unusual or exaggerated but at the same time, the distance allows the audience to ask questions which link the theatrical events on stage to their real situations. Mbangwana equally makes this argument when he asserts that “like most writers in a repressive society, they (Anglophone Cameroon playwrights) use oblique techniques of communication in order to treat matters tabooed by the ruling class” (66). Butake makes it clear that for him this is a deliberate choice. In a 1989 interview with Eckhard Breiting, he states that “You have to be very careful about what and how you are saying it, because this country is very unpredictable. So I’m not going to say things in a blunt manner because I want to be politically committed” (qtd. in Breiting 7). Therefore, for playwrights like Butake, Besong and Epie-Ngome, the use of artistic devices such as metaphor and metonymy serve as deliberate interfaces between the playwright and audience to facilitate communication.

Bate Besong’s *Beast of No Nation*^{vi}, is set in Ednouye, a particular location and to the perceptive eye, an obvious anagram for Yaoundé, but Besong indicates clearly in the footnote at the opening page of the play that “Ednouaye is a fictional city”. Ednouaye remains a fictional city to the reader of the play but on stage the illusion is bridged as the audience links the actions on stage to those happening in Cameroon. As a result, Ednouaye becomes a metonymy for Cameroon. *Beast* has no plot, but captures the plight of the night-soil men who work tirelessly escorting huge mounds of fetid waste and the narrator, a kind of maverick who prods the night-soil men into action. The climax of the play comes when the Night-soil men storm the office of Dealsham Aadindingin, the supreme commander of Ewawa, for their identity cards. In this regard, *Beasts of No nation* responds to Femi Osofisan’s play *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*. The similarities in the names of the principal characters make this intertextual link fairly evident. In Osofisan’s play, Aringindin, a retired military official, with the community’s approval, organizes a group of local vigilante night watchmen to combat the growing nuisance of armed robbers. Aringindin however uses his power to unleash a reign of terror and eventually, the night watchmen become robbers under him and loot the community. The two voices of conscience in the play, Ayinde, the teacher and his friend

Yobi die. Ayinde is shot by robbers and Yobi kills herself than be yoked in with her father, Kansilor, in Aringindin's corrupt regime. Thus, Osofisan's play ends with the victory of Aringindin over the people. This ending has displeased critics like Tejumola Olaniyin who believe that "it does matter that the masses be represented as active agents fashioning history rather than as passive surfaces on which history is inscribed ...that especially when there is pervasive rot in the society it is crucial to foreground small acts of progressive heroism that will certainly be found here or there" (120). Therefore, in killing off Ayinde and Yobi, Osofisan seems to have betrayed the masses and it is this betrayal that Besong seems to correct in *Beast*.

The Yaounde University Theater gave a historic performance of *Beast of No Nation* at the University Amphi Theater 700 on the 26th of March 1991. Directed by Bole Butake, the play opened with the very Osofisian character, the narrator in the lavatory. The stage props were three wooden toilet bowls and very dirty buckets. These stage props invest the theater hall with a repellent stench. Besong's dialogue is sparse and fragmented, yet one gets the gist that the Night-soil men want their freedom and the Narrator's repetition of a "Hero goes to war to die" intones the self sacrifice that is needed to change the status quo. In the course of the play when the Night-soil men, cripple and blind man, enact many plays-within-a-play in which they lampoon state officials, they usually show their disgust with the state of things by turning their backs to fart at the audience. The stench from them further increases the imaginary stench. Butake's production offsets Besong's fragmented dialogue with a characterization of Besong's central metaphor of "fetid waste". The "night-soil men", carriers of "Shit" are permanently "singing to the sound and rhythm of buckets of excrement being loaded on and off to trucks waiting off stage" (*Beasts* 41). Like Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Bate Besong uses excrement and filth as a metaphor for corruption, dictatorship, and human rights abuses. In fact the excrement becomes a signifier for everything that has gone wrong in the nation state. As Lyonga points out, Besong's images of filth "constitute his views of Cameroon, as a country in a state of advanced degeneracy instead of the officially declared 'advanced democracy'" ("Le Degre Zero" 162).

In Besong's play therefore, Ednuouay becomes a metonymy for the Republic of Cameroon echoing President Paul Biya's often quoted phrase of the 90s that "quand Yaoundé respire, le Cameroun vit".^{vii} Yaoundé is not just the capital of Cameroon but also the president's ethnic stronghold. Through these metonymical references, Besong holds Cameroon up to a mirror for scrutiny. The Night-soil men as the carriers of "shit" become the lowliest of the low. In Bole Butake's production of *Beast of No Nation*, the night -soil men dressed in torn shorts and shirts that were heavily soiled marking their poverty. The "excrement" around them further dehumanized them. In contrast, Aadingingin, the supreme leader of Ednouaye, was exorbitantly clad in a black suit and spotting a gun. Although he is a civilian, it was very clear to the audience that he retains an air of a military dictator. Besong blames the degeneration of Ednuoay to the ruling "frogs"^{viii} represented here by Aadingingin that adhere to a secret cult of "greed, grab, and graft". They are "thieves of no nation" who form "a brainless and sensuous class, who someday will take the Ednuoay nation hostage as a result of their inexhaustible greed" (41). Because of the suffocating atmosphere created by Besong's metaphorical excrement, there is very little room for character growth. The characters are shadows that are better seen as metaphors for the oppressor or the oppressed depending on their actions. The Night-soil men, the cripple, Blindman and the narrator, despite his maverick statements, are the oppressed of society. According to Hilarious Ambe "the fragmented and warped nature of the character drawing of this oppressed group reinforces the theme of slavery and dispossession contained in the central metaphor of shit and stench". Comrade Dealsham Aadingingin, the supreme leader of Ednouaye as a representative of the oppressor class can only speak torture, and his cacophonous name is supposed to reveal his emptiness and relationship with Ngugi wa Thiongo's Cambridge Fraudsham in *Petals of Blood*. Cambridge Fraudsham is the headmaster at Siriana who oppresses the students and denies them the right to participate in any decision-making about their own welfare. Dealsham Aringindin like Fraudsham frauds the night-soil men giving them a "raw deal". He has nothing to offer to the people of Ednouye. On their part, the night-soil men have been dehumanized, which is an indictment of the dehumanization of Anglophones within the nation state called Cameroon.

Anglophones are carriers of “shit” with no identification papers, but their quest for identification papers may be their saving grace. The identification papers are a metaphor for their identity as full members of the Cameroonian nation. For now, Anglophones, like the night-soil men, are living on the margins, beasts of no nation performing moribund drudgery. The “Narrator,” who is called “professor” by the night-soil men is a self-styled warrior for liberty and freedom, who seems to be the mouthpiece of the playwright. The narrator provokes the night-soil-men into thinking. He declares “O most venerable Anglo...my co-workers in the field of shitology don’t have their independence and freedom. It appears that you’ll soon have to decide to fight or run. A hero goes to war to die” (39). The narrator repeats the phrase “a hero goes to war to die” several times in the play turning it into a leitmotiv. The night-soil men seem to heed his call and storm Aadingingin’s office, but they meet resistance. Victory is not yet at their doorstep, but there’s hope in the very act of demanding identification.

Equally, hope appears in the very use of the metaphor of excrement. If one delves into the playwright’s Bayang/ejagham ethnic origins, there is a saying “yat kebi ke yat nsay” Which roughly translates into “step into excrement rather than a thorn”. This is a good luck wish because excrement smells but it is soft and does not inflict a wound whereas a thorn causes a wound and spills blood. If one works these meanings into the excrement metaphor, then the situation in Ednouye can be remedied. Anglophones represented by the night-soil men can finally claim their identity and all the privileges that come with it. Besong does not disguise his intentions in this play. By using the excrement metaphor, Besong shocks his audience into asking questions and seeking solutions towards eradicating the excrement and the stench it produces. It is a call for Anglophones to wake up and smell the stench of the “excrement” around them and take the necessary measures to liberate themselves even if they die in the process. But Besong’s metaphor inflates to capture his language in general. His “linguistic inflations” as Hansel Eyoh calls it become metaphors for Besong’s frustrations with the question of Anglophone marginalization in Cameroon and the suffocation of his creative processes. For Besong his medium becomes his message and like Siamese twins, any attempt to separate the two can easily lead to a total loss of meaning all together.

The metonymic references and metaphors in Besong's *Beast of No Nation* were not lost to the Government of Cameroon, so when this play was staged in Yaounde on March 26th 1991, the playwright was arrested and charged with subversion. The reaction of the government representative in the audience is captured in his now often quoted infamous letter:

It is a clear political pamphlet directed at the regime in power that is held responsible for the economic crisis through corruption, favoritism and capital flight to foreign banks. The author holds the thesis that Francophones in power are responsible for the Economic crisis because they are producers of waste and embezzlers of public funds...the author equally affirms, and this is the central thesis of the play that "the Anglophones are marginalized and confined to undignified roles like that of "carriers of excrements". They do not have any professional identity cards which they are asking for in vain...the play ends with a appeal for rebellion and the disregard of the present authority...I think in my opinion, that at the time when the government is exerting great and constant efforts to make Cameroon united where the two communities coexist in all brotherliness it is abnormal that intellectuals should promote divisions and conflicts. (Biatcha qtd. in Ambanasom, "Education" 115)

Butake takes the use of metaphor and metonymy even further in *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*. Like Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*, *Shoes and Four Men in Arms* is simply an extension of the title. This play opens with four soldiers on patrol guarding a pile of mismatched shoes left behind by pro-democracy student demonstrators who come under a military attack. While guarding the shoes the soldiers have the opportunity to reflect on their role within this un-named state and through their commander, they are re-educated to join the masses to fight for their human rights. Like Becket's play, Butake's *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*' adherence to the unity of place is a clue to the play's dramaturgy. The unity of place is a barren stage with a pile of mismatched shoes, a kind of gallows, which invites the soldiers to re-evaluate their actions in the light of their common humanity with those who own the shoes. At the onset of the play, the soldiers^{ix} are excited with their operation:

First: ... How many did we capture during the operation?

Fourth: Who cares? All the baggas should have been shot. Especially with that stampede. (*Shoes* 118).

And as the soldiers continue to explain; doing away with the corpses is no big deal because,” there is a lot of forest all over the place: east, south, centre, center, south, and east. Every where is forest.” (117) and in case the parents come to ask for their bodies, all that needs to be done according to the First Soldier is “ Show them the empty cells and mortuary. Nobody dead. Nobody arrested.” (117). In the 1994 production of *Shoes And Four Men In Arms* by the Yaounde Flame players, the audience by murmurs and handclapping showed a recognition of the situation typified in the play. The student protests, the lack of civil rights, the rule of the gun and usual forms of torture like tear gas, horsewhip and rape are all signifiers that did not go unnoticed. However, following the Brechtian alienation technique, Butake facilitates recognition of these signifiers by defamiliarizing the audience with their reality not just by the absurdity of four armed soldiers guarding a huge pile of mismatched shoes, but also with an all female cast which contradicted the title of the play’s “four men in arms”. As Eckhered Breitinger affirms:

The gender difference between the actresses and the soldier characters, their macho behaviour and cracking of sexist jokes, very strongly points to the relativity of what is shown on stage and the difference between what is being shown on stage and what is meant in political terms. The elaborate hairstyles under military caps, the female bodies under the uniforms show that Butake does not want his performers to embody realist-illusionist images of soldiers. He wants his audience to understand through the visually obvious gender discrepancies in his stage figures that they are witnessing a performance and not the real thing (15).

Thus by doing this Butake assigns the audience an active role in the production by forcing them to ask questions about the theatricality of what is being presented and how each individual element relates to real life events in their environment.

Also, the very absence of an actual macro-location for Butake’s *Shoes and Four Men in Arms* opens a creative space for the audience. Butake indicates in *Shoes and Four Men in Arms* that the “The play is

set anywhere in a military dictatorship”. Like an oral performing artist, Bole Butake invites the audience to make its own connections between the action of the play and actual events in their lives to determine setting. Thus the setting plays out itself and therefore, the audience through Aristotelian syllogism determines the setting. When the play was staged in Yaounde in 1994 the metonymical references between Butake’s “anywhere where there is a military dictatorship” and Cameroon became clear. This was achieved by recognition of the signifiers of military dictatorship on stage compared to those within the real Cameroon. The perceptive audience did not fail to notice the similarities between what is happening in this play and the government’s brutal attack on the students of the University of Yaoundé in 1991, which led to the deaths and detention of several students. But the government through intimidation and outright repressive means continued to refuse any wrong doing, and the Minister of communications made his now notorious pronouncement: “zero mort”.^{*} To exemplify the nature of their existence, the citizens of this fictional oppressive military dictatorship only exist as voices and shoes. Although the shoes are many, it is impossible to find a matching pair. This mismatched shoes become a metaphor for the dismembering and violation of the body that has taken place. The litany of abuses inflicted on civilians and the lies fabricated, as cover-ups are endless as revealed in this exchange between the soldiers:

Third: Many have been treated and sent home, the doctors said. But I saw seven who had been operated because of bullet wounds. There is this girl lying in a comma with a big wound at the back of her head. Somebody must have hit her had with the butt of a rifle. I don’t know if she can survive.

Second: She must be the one I hear they showed on television. They said, she had tried to escape by jumping from the military truck, which was transporting those who had been captured. They said she was the only one who had received injuries.

First: Liars! They pushed her off the truck. Some ethno fascist was bent on killing her. (*Shoes*, 127)

Likewise, the shoes become a metonymy for the striking students, signifiers of the opposition towards the ruling government. That is why the shoes become “sensitive military material” (135). These mismatched shoes also become a metaphor for a country that has become largely mismatched. The government no longer fits the people and there is an urgent need for the mismatch to be corrected. The satirical thrust of the play is highlighted in the way Butake dramatizes the stereotypes. The military drills, looting, rapes, and general brutalization of civilians are enacted as play within plays, mime dances and role-playing. At the end of each of these “interludes” which are punctuated with revealing songs like “soldier di suffer commandant di chop money,”^{xi} the soldiers evaluate their performance as stereotypical soldiers. During this evaluation the audience also carries out its own evaluation of the action they have just witnessed. It is in this light that Butake’s play explores in the character of First soldier, a humane consciousness capable of questioning the orders coming from the General. The first soldier who is also the commandant is pitted against Fourth soldier, his junior officer, one of the “sons of the soil, defenders of the land” (*Shoes*, 126). The fourth soldier, spurred by ethnic alliance believes that “orders are orders”. His determination to protect the status quo is what the Second Soldier describes as “stomachtological auto-development” (*Shoes* 129), underscored by this explanation from the Fourth Soldier:

When the other man and his people chopped for over twenty donkey years nobody said anything. Now my own, the General comes, he has not even done half time and people are already shouting. Dat one na jealousy pure and simple. (118)

Playing on actual historical reality, the Fourth soldier is here recalling Amadou Ahidjo’s twenty-two year reign as Cameroon’s first president, and Paul Biya (General) who at the time the play was first performed in 1994 had been president for twelve years. It is because of this conviction that the first soldier as a member of the Paul Biya’s Beti tribe, declares “a son of the soil will never allow traitors to take power from us” (120). What motivates the repressive activities of this Beti soldier and his kind is what the first soldier aptly calls “ethno-fascism”. The binary opposition of the “sons of the soil” and the rest of citizens in the country challenges the hegemonic concept of a unitary nation state. Therefore within this construct, the traitors are the civilians in a peaceful protest

match demanding a more humane nation, holding “harmless placards: liberty! We want freedom! We want jobs! Give us freedom” (*Shoes* 129). The “sons of the soil” are given ammunition to shoot these protesters, because they threaten to cut them off the spoils of the land.

But in what is reminiscent of the Stockholm syndrome^{xii}, Fourth soldier eventually is schooled by the First, Second and third soldier to understand the repressive antics of the general, which in the long run will benefit no one. Thus, when the shoes disappear, it is clear to the soldiers that this is an alibi. As the second Soldier explains, “the General has an alibi. Ali Baba and his forty times four hundred hoodlums can now take revenge on the people in this part of the land.” (*Shoes* 139) The disappearing shoes give the General a new reason for repression and a state of emergency is declared. But Butake uses the missing shoes to metaphorically show that the General is losing grip on his quest to keep the nation and its people mismatched, because using the people’s voice as a metaphor for people power, the repression only breeds further protests as voices from off stage chant “we want freedom we want jobs we want our salaries give us freedom liberty now “. Although as expected, there is a “sudden outburst of gunfire and then pandemonium” (*Shoes* 141), the voices are not drowned because Butake’s call to revolutionary action is answered by the First soldier who announces emphatically:

Well I am going to join them. May be I will be shot. May be I will die. But the people are sure to win. It doesn’t matter how long it takes and how many people get killed. I smell freedom and liberty for all. I am standing to be counted. (*Shoes* 141).

Yet to contradict the hegemonic discourse on nation building which exploits the multicultural society of nation states like Cameroon, Butake reconstructs a new nation where every one is a son of the soil and works for the common good. It is to underscore this point that the Fourth soldier, who had hitherto seen himself apart from the rest, decides to join his fellow patrol officers’ decision to fight on the side of the oppressed. As he explains:

Who do you think is staying? We have been four men in arms being used like play things, like toys even by a small nyama, nyama, group of very corrupt thieves and self-seekers, to humiliate, to torture and to kill our own brothers and sisters,

the suffering people, in the name of a law and land which they manipulate at will and in which they have no faith. (141)

With the re-education of fourth soldier completed, Butake has also completed his mission of raising the consciousness of his audience. Through the metonymic references, and metaphors he bridges the gap between his unidentified setting and the actual setting where the audience resides. The actions on stage become a metonymy for the actions in Cameroon. By the time the play comes to an end the audience not only knows that the unidentified setting is Cameroon, it is given a strategy to fight the General and his corrupt gang- this strategy resides in people power, acting together as one. As the first soldier emphasizes, “from this moment we must demonstrate a deep respect for human life and the basic rights of each and every individual.” (142).

In the *Survivors*, published in 1989, Butake indicates, that the play is set “Anywhere in a situation of war or social upheaval”. The play centers on Mboysi (woman), one of the five survivors of a natural disaster who find themselves trapped and exploited by the government who divert relief supplies meant for the survivors. The government also manipulates the donors by not telling them that there are only five survivors. When Mboysi, who is the liaison between the survivors and the soldiers guarding the loot, finds out that she and the other survivors are being exploited, she shoots the lead soldier. However, she is killed by another soldier who responds to the gun shot. While Butake’s *The Survivors* ends with the death of the revolutionary Mboysi at the hands of a soldier as she is singing her victory song, *Shoes and Four men in Arms* ends with the voices of the soldiers turned revolutionaries singing with determination to fight on the side of the oppressed. So Butake sees hope and maybe very soon, one may be reading or watching a play from Butake with this note on setting: “set where-ever there’s democracy”.

While Butake and Bate Besong use metonymy in exploring setting, Victor Epie Ngome in *What God has Put Asunder* uses metonymy to explore characterization. However these metonymic references may not be very evident because Ngome uses the marriage metaphor to develop plot thus creating two levels of meaning, one literary and the other allegorical. The audience becomes aware of this allegorical level because of a shared history

and cultural framework. In this reconstruction of shared history, Ngome questions the idea of the nation as defined by the hegemony in Cameroon. So from the sound, the ethnic origin, costumes or the actions of the characters the audience immediately identifies what or who is being represented. The character names become metonymies for country names and regions. For example the character Emeka, with his identifiable Ibo name becomes a representation for Nigeria. In a similar way, Weka the central character becomes a compression of West Kamerun (with the spelling of “Cameroon” used during the German occupation). West Cameroon is the identity of Anglophone Cameroon during the period of federation from 1961-1972.

Epic Ngome thus uses the metaphor of “marriage” between Francophone Cameroon, represented by the Moslem Garba and West Cameroon represented by Weka to assess the historical gains of Anglophone Cameroon and how the gains have affected the identity of Anglophones. The play revolves around Weka, an orphan raised by Rev. Gordon and Sister Sabeth (Britain) and Garba, brought up by Louis (France). Weka has two suitors vying for her hand in marriage, Emeka (Nigeria particularly Eastern Nigeria) and Garba (East Cameroon). Weka reluctantly accepts Garba as the lesser of two evils. The characterization of Emeka in the Yaounde Flame Player’s production of *What God Has Put Asunder* was particularly effective. The role played by Langmia Kehbuma got the audience to their feet. The way he staggered in church to argue his claim on Weka was hilarious. His use of pidgin, the Ibo accent, and his name, which is of Ibo origin immediately, gave his identity away. However, Weka rejects Emeka because of his overbearing attitude while they were in the orphanage. This is in reference to the overbearing nature of the Ibos (Nigerians) when West Cameroon was administered as part of Nigeria under British colonization.^{xiii} Weka therefore reluctantly accepts Garba as the lesser of two evils. Because of Weka’s reluctance in accepting Garba and Garba’s objections to certain portions of the marriage vow, Rev. Unor (United Nations) solemnizes the marriage probationally. In this case the couple is given time to get to know each other. However, the marriage with Garba proves disastrous. Weka protests to Garba for treating her as a “concubine” and her children as “bastards” in spite of the amount of wealth that her marriage brought to him. Weka, like West Cameroon is the bread

basket of the marriage union. As she points out “ By marrying me...if one can call this marriage you became Lord and master over the cocoa farms my father left me” (31). Moreover Weka and her children are forced to speak Garba’s language (French) instead of their own (English). Weka becomes disillusioned and decides to abandon Garba. As a result Weka and her children return to her home (West Cameroon). Their focus is “to build this place back to a respectable home” (3). When Gordon learns of Weka’s fate, he feels guilty for abandoning Weka. He should have “maintained a certain presence. Maybe not exactly like Louis but at least a dissuasive present...to deter him [Garba] from his excesses” (39).

Nevertheless, Garba tries to force Weka to return with him, but he is rough handled and forced out of Weka’s home by Weka’s children with the sympathy of Rev. Gordon and Jim Rican [America]. Garba resorts to the law courts but he is informed that the marriage with Weka was not a real marriage. First, Weka was coerced into the marriage. Next, Garba had signed a monogamous marriage but he practiced polygamy, and lastly he had forced Weka and her children to learn his own language and abide by the customs of his land. Therefore the terms of the marriage as stipulated on marriage number 001/UN of Feb. 11, 1961, which allowed the couple to live in physical separation in a “simulated wedlock”, are upheld. The marriage registration number is actually the plebiscite date when West Cameroon gained independence by joining La République du Cameroun in a federation.

As Bate Besong points out,

Weka in Epie Ngome’s *What God Has put Asunder* captures the double colonization of the Anglophone Cameroonian. The heroine exists as a credible character stifled by an opponent who is a metaphorical husband. The metaphor of marriage helps to encode what is realistically portrayed as a human agony in an oppressive system. (Bate, “Who is afraid)

It is this oppression that legitimizes Weka’s separation from her husband. Garba’s oppressive and exploitative nature becomes a representation of what Anglophone Cameroonians refer to as the Anglophone problem. The solution to this problem for Epie Ngome is a return to federation instead of the present unitary state. This counter hegemonic discourse is based on the fact that the unitary state is not only illegal, Francophones and Anglophones

represented by Weka and Garba are incompatible, hence his title “*What God Has Put Asunder*”. The title counters the biblical adage “what God has put together let no man put asunder” thus critiquing the role missionaries played in WeKa’s re-colonization. It is within this perspective that Epie Ngome’s play is acerbic because it dramatizes in a very poignant way the problems faced by the Anglophone minority within a francophone-dominated union. When the playwright intones “what God has put Asunder”, he expects the audience and Anglophone Cameroonians in general to answer, “No man should put together” and act on it. It is pertinent to note that Epie Ngome’s original title for his play was “For Better or for Worse” which was written as a radio play many years before it’s revival in 1992 by the Flame Players of Cameroon, under the title “What God has put Asunder”. The critical shift in title is a testimony to the changing consciousness of the Anglophone Cameroonian during this time.

Although *What God has put Asunder* functions as an allegory, it is still engaging at the literal level. Epie Ngome uses his creative genius to create realistic characters and situations that are exciting in their own right. He uses language, which is captivating, full of wit and humor. As a result, Ambanasom contends that Epie Ngome’s language in *What God Has Put Asunder*, “consists of natural, spontaneous [...] exchanges that are a joy to listen to time and time again [...] His (Epie-Ngome) dialogues thus have a conversational value, the work of a stylist and a brilliant conversationalist versed in the art of talking, a dramatic attribute of great value. For it has the advantage of holding and sustaining the interest of both readers and audiences (51).

The metonymic references were evident amongst Anglophones, when *What God Has Put Asunder* was staged in the mid-nineties in different towns in Cameroon. The audience recognized the characters and cheered the final judgment of the court, which allows Weka to live separately in a simulated wedlock, thus asserting her own identity. They questioned why this theatrical verdict could not be translated to real life.

As Eyoh points out, many of these playwrights (Butake, Epie Ngome, Besong),

See themselves in a role of developing the critical consciousness of their society, of mobilizing people for change through the destruction of the ‘culture of silence’, which has so

far subjected them to years of oppression. Their role seems to be that of building the foundation of a new society in which social justice and a sense of communal belonging can prevail (10).

As a result, these plays, to use Abiola Irele's phrase created a "new realism", which reflected the disillusionment that had invaded Cameroonian minds.

While the Anglophone male writer during this phase was concerned with the plight of Anglophones in Cameroon, the women writers dealt with their double marginalization as Anglophones and women. The 1985 Beijing conference on women greatly publicized the marginal status of women throughout the world. In Cameroon, this translated into women's pressure groups like the Association of Female Journalists and the Association of Female Jurists. This period also witnessed the proliferation of nonprofit organizations determined to fill the gaps left by government in caring for marginalized groups like women and children. In addition, women-centered programs in English, like *Women and Development* anchored by Anne Nsang on Cameroon Radio and television network, became revolutionary in publicly discussing women's issues, which had been considered private matters. In each program, one or two women presented personal testimonies depending on the topic of the day. Topics included widowhood, divorce, polygamy, or problems of the girl-child. Then a panel of experts, including a legal expert, explained to the in-house and television audience the legal options open to women in the stated situation and where they could seek help. This was the first time that women's issues were given center stage in public, and it gave women the confidence to speak out. Consequently, for the first time, women appeared on television acknowledging various forms of abuse justified by tradition or sanctioned by the constitution. Furthermore, a Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in Cameroon. With the creation of this ministry, the International Women's Day, March 8, became a day to manifest "women power" and solidarity. On this day women wear a uniform designed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and there are rallies and parades in all major towns. On Women's Day in Cameroon, women literally take over the country. They can be spotted in their uniforms in every nook and cranny celebrating their freedom of

being. On this day, there is usually a special edition of *Women and Development* that ends with a big party. These events of the day are later shown on television, further energizing women. Thus from the rural to the urban woman, the slogan “gender equality” became commonplace in Cameroon. To crown it all, a Women’s Studies Department was created in the University of Buea. Here Professor Nalova Lyonga founded a magazine of creative writing on women titled *That Rocky Place*. Some plays published in its second volume, like Asheri Kilo’s “The Divorce”, were first performed as part of the activities marking International Women’s Day.

It was in this social environment that Anne Tanyi -Tang wrote and published *Ewa and Other Plays* in 1999. *Ewa* brings to light problems facing the girl child, including lack of education and early marriage. The play also centers on Ewa’s mother, who was severely abused by her late husband and ends up projecting this abuse on Ewa, continuously abusing her both verbally and physically. Ewa is starved, not clothed, beaten, and has pepper thrown on her body. Nyango, Ewa’s mother, explains the source of her actions in this angry speech directed at Ewa: “He (Ewa’s father) abandoned me throughout the pregnancy and went out for a merrymaking trip with my mate (co-wife) when I was in labour. I almost died in childbirth [...] In order to win back his love, I had to send you home to my mother. I hate you” (9). Although Ewa graduates brilliantly from primary school, Nyango refuses to send her to secondary school. She is subjected to an early marriage at thirteen to Ajoh, who continues the cycle of abuse. Fortunately a concerned social worker intervenes and Ewa receives 30,000CFA to start a small business. She uses part of this money to go to one of her aunts, who welcomes her. The other part of the money is used to establish a restaurant where she sells food by day; at night she attends evening classes in preparation for the GCE “O” Level. Once she succeeds at the “O” Level, Ewa continues to prepare for the GCE “A” Level. The play ends when Ewa’s name is announced on the radio as one of the successful candidates. Education is therefore seen by Tanyi-Tang as one way of improving the marginal status of women. The play also claims a girl’s right to education in place of an early marriage.

Makuchi’s *Your Madness Not Mine*, a collection of short stories, is another text written by an Anglophone Cameroon woman during this period. The themes in Makuchi’s short stories are wide

ranging, from the fragile relationships between Francophones and Anglophones, through the problems brought about by Western timber exploiters, to women's social and domestic problems. Nonetheless, whatever her theme, her central characters are women who are strong and ready to battle for survival. As Eliose Briere confirms, "The characters Makuchi creates are survivors; they are scrappy and they are strong, especially the women [...] Makuchi uproots her people from silence and transplants them into new soil, staking out new possibilities for growth, for expression (introduction xiv).

The first story, "The Healer," deals with the theme of infertility. Infertility is a recurrent theme in African literature by women authors since in most African societies the value of a woman is embedded in her ability to become a mother. Although science has proven the contrary, in the event that a couple is childless the blame is always placed on the woman and not on the man because she is supposed to physically carry the pregnancy. In "The Healer" the narrator tells the story of her aunt, who is in a childless marriage. The aunt is a very vivacious and cheerful personality but the cheerfulness "was marred by something, something that lay hidden somewhere behind her eyeballs" (Healer 6). The narrator's aunt visits every native doctor she can reach to make her fertile to no avail. Her brother determines to send her to the legendary Azembe. "Azembe was renowned all over the land. His name was on the lips of many people because it was claimed that he would succeed where other men had failed" (4). In fact, Azembe had made fertile the wives of a policeman who were having difficulties conceiving; as the narrator reports,

they both (wives of the policeman) had children, one boy, and one girl. But something curious, something devious, revealed itself as the two children got older. When they stared into each other's face, they seemed to reflect the same image, the same eyes staring into the same square face. The family had pretended to overlook the resemblance when the babies were younger, telling every visitor "Ooooooh, oooh! They look so much like their father." The visitors would believe them if they did not know the policeman [...] those visitors who knew the truth, especially the women, admired the children, praised them, commented on how healthy they looked and reserved

their laughter and mockery when they were out of sight and ear shot (9).

Despite this, the narrator's aunt is taken to Azembe by her brother. The medicines Azembe give her make her drowsy. One day as she recovers from her drugged sleep she notices semen on her underwear. Since only Azembe enters her room, she imagines what has happened. She then sets out to trap Azembe; the next time Azembe gives her medication she does not drink it but throws it under her bed. When Azembe later enters her room she pretends to be asleep and Azembe begins to disrobe her. As the aunt reveals, "At that precise moment...something had snapped in her head, invading her arteries, spreading through her entire body and she seemed possessed [...]" She goes on a rampage to kill Azembe. She sets the healer's complex of patient huts ablaze. Azembe is finally taken to court and is given a three-year sentence, but dies of a heart attack in jail. The aunt cannot comprehend why "the stories of all those women (sexually abused by Azembe) were only worth a three-year sentence." This story systematically reveals that some of the problems of infertility among couples originate with men. If Azembe can make the women pregnant there is nothing wrong with them; the problem lies with their husbands. Because in Cameroon, as in most African societies, infertility is associated with women, she is the one who goes in search of treatment. Charlatan healers like Azembe have capitalized on this to feed their greed and lust.

In "Market Scene," another story in *Your Madness Not Mine*, Makuchi delves into bonding among women, especially in the marketplace where they have the opportunity to spend long hours "in the business of survival." The market scene is set in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. The women in the central market come from different parts of Cameroon and bond in the marketplace by facing the same challenges, yet their different languages mark and identify them. Those from Anglophone Cameroon speak in Pidgin English and some broken French, while the Francophones speak a mixture of pidgin and broken French. As Briere comments, "The linguistic mix spoken by Cameroonians in the capital is indeed the language of survival, the language of depopulation [...]" monolingualism is a luxury few can afford in a world where survival requires more than one language" (xvii). The daily

occurrences in the market are like a theater ritual, punctuating normal life with glimpses of the diabolic nature of man. On this day a husband seeks revenge, cutting a young man with a knife because he has duped his wife into buying a worn-out pair of jeans instead of a brand-new one. This incident reminds Sibora, one of the market women of how she has been abandoned by her husband. As she puts it, “Well, this woman is lucky. At least she had someone to come and fight for her...You all know how I’ve been struggling and suffering with my children since that man, that devil, that wicked...well he’s not even a man...since he left and shackled up with that pute, that, that, ...bordel (prostitute)” (35). Sibora is overwhelmed with single parenthood. Her sixteen-year-old daughter is not only pregnant, she herself is sick. A trip to the doctor brings prescriptions for drugs that cost 17,000CFA. Her plea to the doctor that she is financially overburdened does not change the situation. As Sibora recounts her story to her fellow market women, she is overwhelmed and collapses. The others do not know whether she is joking or has actually died. Sibora frequently tells stories like this. As one of the market women says, “Other people’s troubles always raised the lid of the basket of problems that she had logged within her heart all these years” (35). Women as a group are a marginalized lot; therefore, when faced with problems of womanhood, women in Cameroon become one. There is no Anglophone or Francophone. Makuchi creates women who go through the same hardships. As one of them says, “We had all come a long way from home, we were all in the business of surviving” (28). They left their distant villages and towns grudgingly following their husbands to a strange city to eke out a living. In their quest for survival they find friendship, a friendship that helps them to fight against the economic depression that has devalued the currency and their existence.

In Makuchi’s “Accident’s are a side show,” the central theme is the fragile relationship between Anglophones and Francophones. A roadside accident between a car driven by an Anglophone woman, Manda, and a taxi driven by a Francophone man quickly degenerates into issues of identity in the nation-state, Cameroon. The Francophone driver angrily tells Manda that driving is a privilege that has been given to women but women have yet to master the skill. Manda has just come from another fruitless visa interview at the American Embassy. Her request to join her

husband had again been refused. In her frustration, she keeps quiet, but when her friend in the front seat, Manoji, responds to the taxi driver in English, the floodgates open. The Francophone driver leaves the subject of Manda's womanhood and attacks her "Anglophoneness." On hearing English, he responds, "Ah no be tok...Ce sont les Anglos"^{xiv} (108). The quarrel soon degenerates as Manoji also abuses the driver as a "Frog." The Francophone goes on to abuse Manoji in French:

imbecil. Regard moi ca. Il fallait qu'on vous laisse avec Nigeria, ces anglos. On a pitié de vous a accepté dans notre pays et au lieu de rester tranquille vous venez nous cassez de pied pour rien (109).^{xv}

These words capture the way Francophones perceive Anglophones as second-class citizens. Anglophones are not supposed to have a voice in Cameroon. Recognizing the link of Anglophone Cameroon to Nigeria during the colonial days, Francophones refer to Anglophones provocatively as Nigerians who were saved by French Cameroon from the excesses of Nigeria. This quarrel exemplifies the fragile relationship between Anglophones and Francophones. The least provocation leads to insults on the lines of "Anglos" and "Frogs." Makuchi's characters display the language interplay in Cameroon. As Eliose Briere notes, "Makuchi is one of the first African writers to not only allow us to hear the rich linguistic mosaic that characterizes modern Africa, but to show us how language, class, and power intersect in the postcolonial context" (xviii). Makuchi's "Accidents are a Roadside Show" successfully depicts Anglophone women as double victims, first as women, then as Anglophones.

Nevertheless, some critics believe that in order to establish an Anglophone literary tradition, Anglophone Cameroon literature must move beyond what they see as a literature of disillusionment and victimization. As Lyonga contends,

The chronotype of nearly all existing Anglophone protest works multiplies the symbols of victimization, but this cannot be the force of the Anglophone literary tradition. Anglophone Cameroon literature has to move from deconstruction to a reconstruction of a heritage that Anglophones are stringently clinging to in this pluralist era of Cameroon's democratization ("Le Degre Zero" 102).

Nevertheless, Becker rejects this view by stating, “As every society needs a literature of support to help it identify itself as a coherent culture, so every society needs a prophetic literature to rage against its injustices and its failures to live up to the ideals it proclaims to the world” (259).

The Third Phase: In Process

The third phase of Anglophone Cameroon literature is still evolving, although it already shows a lot of potential. Unlike the first and second phases which were quite distinct in terms of genre, there is no dominant genre so far. Nonetheless, it is clear that Drama, which dominated the second phase of Anglophone Cameroon literature, is on the decline while prose and poetry are back on the radar with a vengeance. Also this third phase has a strong showing of Anglophone Cameroon writers resident in the Diaspora.

In terms of Prose, several new writers have emerged to add their names to the existing pantheon of prose writers while others have confirmed their positions as established prose writers. They include Alobwede D’Epie, Francis Nyamnjoh, Jane Ekaney, Emmanuel Achu, Barbara Tah Gwanmesia, Rosemary Ekosso, Makuchi, Fon Tangum, Mboh Tenengang, Nkemgong Nkengasong, Ntemfac Ofegbe, Yenika Agbaw, Dorothy Atabong, Tikum Mba Azonga etc. These writers have either produced short stories or novels. The thematic canvass for these writers is wide and varied but their ultimate purpose is didactic. Most of them seek through manipulation of plot, characterization and narrative technique to debunk the ills that plague their society while offering some ideological alternatives.

Alobwede D’Epie’s first published novel, *The Death Certificate*, is a castigation of the brazen corruption and economic rape that has bedeviled post independent Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. The novel is set in Ewawa, an obvious intertextuality with Butake’s setting for his play *And Palm Wine will Flow*. Ewawa is made up of ten provinces. As Ambanasom explains:

It is instructive to mathematically conceptualize it in terms of ten concentric circles each representing a province, thus making a total of ten concentric provinces. The province in the centre, the seat of political power and economic influence is

known as the first province. The closer one is to the center of power and influence, the more satisfied or less censorious one is with regard to the system, and the reverse is true, discontent emanating from the periphery. Criticism is thus proportional to the distance from the center and the prerogative of the marginalized. No wonder then that the greatest critics of the government come from the marginal 9th and 10th provinces.” (The *Cameroon Novel*, 265)

The plot centers on the exploits of the flawed banker, Mongo Meka who is a native of the first province. As the General Treasurer of the Ewawa National treasury, Meka treats the treasury like his personal account and embezzles a staggering 550 billion franc CFA which he mostly carts away to a Parisian bank under the name of his French wife, Antoinette Yvonne. In order to mislead the public and prevent any investigation/prosecution for this brazen theft, Meka fakes his death by accident in a neighboring country, Kabon. With a death certificate established, Mongo Meka is duly mourned and buried with a financial extravaganza that reveals the way members of the privileged first province pillage the national coffers. Unfortunately, Meka’s wife believes Meka to be really dead and in due course she re-marries a French man, Roger Girard. This development threatens to undermine Meka’s schemes and he has no choice but to return from the dead. In this new twist of events Meka finds himself in a fix. With a genuine death certificate established, Meka is considered an impostor. To further complicate matters, his French wife dies following a natural disaster in Australia thus passing on Mongo Meka’s fortunes to Roger Girard, her new husband. At the end, Mongo Meka commits suicide as his dreams slowly diminish and fate closes in.

This fascinating story is highlighted by Alobwede D’Epie’s narrative technique. The story is told by multiple narrators spearheaded by Mula, Nchinda, Musa and Njock. What marks these narrators is that they are all university graduates, jobless and from marginal provinces, unlike their counterparts from the first and second provinces who are employed. However the fabric of the story also reveals a rich tapestry of assorted genres reminiscent of postmodernist texts. As the erstwhile critic Ambanasom again explains,

“The text appears in places, as a thriller, a detective novel, a piece of investigative journalism, a psychological, realistic novel; or a saga; it contains a handful of poems and several letters; it embodies passages from the Bible and elements from African orature” (*The Cameroonian Novel*, 270).

Yet what emerges from all this is a systematic pillage and squandering of the national resources by natives of a single ethnic group. Their excesses have rendered a whole nation impoverished and there is a nagging need for a social revolution to cleanse the existing socio-political structure. After *The Death Certificate*, Alobwede has published two more novels, *The Lady with a Beard* (2007) and *The Day God Blinkered* (2008).

In addition, Francis Nyamnjoh has recently published *A Nose for money* (2006), *Souls Forgotten* (2007), *The Travail of Diendonné* (2008) and *Married but Available* (2008). While his earlier novels *Mind Searching* (1991) and *The Disillusioned African* (1996) principally use the stream of consciousness technique and are very philosophical and sometimes have the tone of essays, *A Nose for Money*, *Souls Forgotten*, *The Travail of Diendonné*, and *Married But Available*, all set in Mimboland, conform to the traditional form of the novel in terms of plot development.

Told by a bilingual third person omniscient narrator, *A Nose for Money*, centers on the character of Prospère, a semi-illiterate truck driver who comes into wealth under very shady circumstances. Prospère’s move from rags to riches leads him to the capital city of Mimboland, Nyamandem. This move plunges him into a lifestyle that reveals the socio-political-cultural quagmire that is Mimboland, a thinly veiled replica of Nyamnjoh’s homeland, Cameroon. As Dibussi Tande holds, “*A Nose for Money* is a stinging indictment of the post-colonial African state – from its inefficient and indolent civil service, its brutal police force, to its venal elite, without leaving out its subservient relationship with former colonial powers.” (http://www.dibussi.com/2006/04/book_review_a_n.html). Yet this is not a strictly political novel because the story on the surface centers on themes of sexuality and marital unfaithfulness and excessive materialism which together make up the fabric of moral decadence that runs through the entire novel. Nevertheless, what makes *A Nose for Money* palpable is Nyamnjoh’s eye for detail and his penchant for irony. In terms of language, Nyamnjoh’s

sprinkling of French in the otherwise English narration of events is a reflection of the realistic characterization he has injected in this novel. Equally, his incorporation of Bum mythology, vernacular slang and regional dialects is a manifestation of the cultural hybridity foisted on the postcolonial writer as a result of the colonial encounter.

In addition, women novelists like Rosemary Ekosso and Barbara Tah Gwanmesia, both in the Diaspora, have written compelling novels that explore the vicissitudes of womanhood. Gwanmesia's *Vasona's Secret* is a whopping 512 pages. At the center of this riveting tale of love, betrayal, and revenge is the female character, Vasona. Vasona is forced to flee from Bali rather than to face the alternative of not marrying the love of her life, Dobgima. She takes on a new personality and passes off as Veranda, a journalist. But there is an Albino girl in jail suffering untold injustices and the person who holds a key to her identity and freedom is a certain Vasona who once lived in Bali. When Charlotte the daring journalist asks Veranda to join her in the search for the mystery character, Vasona, Veranda is only too willing to visit the land of her childhood where she loved and lost. This search for truth eventually ends with a revelation of Vasona's secret; she is actually Veranda. This romantic thriller is hashed with a backdrop of a Bali cultural landscape that at once embraces and threatens the very characters that it nurtures.

There has also been a lot of productivity in the area of poetry. New poetry collections include, Mathew Takwi's three collections, *People Be Not Fooled* (2004), *On Their Knees* (2006) and *Fire on the Mountain* (2008), Valentine Gana's *Passionate Pearls of Wisdom* (2005), Kamara Kimvala's *Tears of Rage* (2006), Ngong Kum's *Walls of Agony* (2006), Winner of EduArt Bate Besong Award for Poetry 2007, and *Chants of a Lunatic*, (2007), Bate Besong's *Disgrace* (2007), Lloney Monono's *The Dance of Scorpions*, (2007) Kangsen Wakai's, *Fragmented Melodies*, (2007) Dibussi Tande's *No Turning Back: Poems of freedom 1990-1993*, (2007), Peter Vakunta's, *Majunga Tok: Poems in Pidgin*, and NTARIKON: *Poetry for the Downtrodden* (2008), B'abila Mutia's *Coils of Mortal Flesh*, (2008), Emmanuel Doh's *Not Yet Damascus* (2007) and Bertrand Fote's *Floodgates: Emergency Room Life in Verse* (2008) etc. Although the socio-political reality of Cameroon is fodder for most of these poets, the poems often encompass whatever captivates their poetic sensibilities.

For example, Bate Besong's last collection of poetry can be framed using his self-appointed literary title "the obasijom warrior". Amongst the Ejagham/Bayangi ethnic groups in Southwestern Cameroon where Bate Besong hails from, the Obasinjom masquerade is reputed to be endowed with the gift of prophecy, and the power to seek out and destroy witches. The Obasinjom mask has mirrors for eyes which gives it the ability to see beyond the earthly world. This is the stance from which Besong wishes to be understood. He is the Obasijom warrior who through his poetry and writings in general seeks out the "witches" of the decrepit postcolonial nation called Cameroon, bringing them to public scrutiny. Yet, before he died in a car accident on March 8th 2007, the enigmatic Bate Besong was gradually shedding his cloak of Obasijom warrior to become the *Ekpe* masquerade, Emanyangkpe, as indicated in his last volume of poetry launched on the eve of his death titled "*Disgrace: An Autobiographical Narcissus and Emanyangkpe collected poems*".

Ekpe is a secret society (leopard Society) in the Ejagham and Bayang culture open only to men. Central to this society are two masquerades, the Ebongu and Emanyangkpe. While Ebongu is calm and two of them may appear together, Emanyangkpe is usually alone and always appears ferocious in its full-body netted costume. Emanyangkpe is a distraught masquerade which does not hesitate to use the cane which is always in his hand to whip those who are not on his side. Consequently, Besong uses these poems in his anger to whip those undermining the lives of "the common man".

Disgrace (2007) is divided in two sections. Section I, aptly termed "Disgrace: An autobiographical Narcissus", which consists of sixteen autobiographical poems, captures the poet's experiences within the University of Buea. According to Beban Sammy Chumbow, these poems "constitute a series of tabloids in which BB lambasts, castigates and stigmatizes all and sundry for the sorry state of the university and the university system from "autocratic" leaders through "collaborators", "post mortem intellectuals" and "comatose professors" to "dead lecturers" who "organize the ignorance of the faculty and pervert and muzzle discourse" (Foreword to *Disgrace*, Viii). The second section, "Emanyangkpe collected poems", is made up of previously published and unpublished poems. In fact, this section contains most of the

celebrated poems of his earlier volumes of poetry. Although the themes here are diversified, Bate Besong's poetry, or plays for that matter, always revolve around the same issues; the denunciation of oppression of one group by another, economic exploitation, marginalization, corruption, social, political and economic inequality etc. For example he castigates the abuse of power in the "Kaiser Lied":

Brewed;
In deudonal crimsons, Ah! Moronic
You fed

Kangaroo gonads
to the world press corps
to camouflage the soporific bankruptcy

of a traumatized brotherhood-in-
sophistry, already,
shrouded in the obituarist lagoon
of wrong Deal! (62)

This is the same mood expressed in "Ntarikon massacre" inspired by the six who were killed by soldiers during the launching of the Social Democratic Front party in May 1990 in Bamenda. In this poem, BB laments:

The blood is still fresh
On the slabs, the morgues
Are wet.

For those whose
Tomorrows
Are now shards of broken
Glass (59)

In "Their Champagne Party will End", Besong decries state rulers and their cronies who embezzle state funds:

For sure jewry stood for an exploiting race, but
Our own middle men manage to amaze them for all that...

Dead After day

When our workers died of chronic shortages of overwork and
exposure
it was fashionable for the repulsive old creeps;
with large baskets of cash
to give their champagn parties in open defiance of the
victims they had exploited wretched.(88)

Just as Besong throws invectives at those who despoil the
nation for their personal gain, so too does he celebrate the heroes
who champion the cause of the masses. Emanyangpke and
collected poems is replete with poems honoring African heroes like
Kwameh Nkrumah or Nelson Mandela. He also honors Cameroon
national heroes like P.M. Kale, S.A. George, A.N. Jua, Um Nyobe
and Mongo Beti. In one such poem, “The beauty of exile” Besong
explains:

Do not say you are abandoned
And deserted Friend
It is the beauty of your exile
That has shown how ugly we have become
Heroes have made their way
Along the Tchollire swamps into nameless
Catacombs, matyres:
Their limbs become to frozen
For them to rise to their feet, to walk. (95)

Nevertheless, one criticism constantly leveled against BB, is the
opaque form of his art. Often one has to jump his linguistic hoops
to come to grips with his thematic concerns. For example in
“After Mandela’s Earth” BB writes:

year after harlequin year
and the circus also came
to circus town - quislings
of a francophonie
cretin; they devise the decor:
opaque columns of dung, rise
and rise
above this doomed
empire which takes counseling blunders
from the cadaverous

old crocodile whose monumental basilicafolly - in the Bokassa
Zombie
Archipelago - cardinal devil of Yamoussoukro (73)

The reader is easily lost as he tries to decipher BB's differing codes here. But as Ambanasom explains:

Conventional versification is not his inclination. Not for him the regular poetic lines rhymes or fixed stanzaic forms. Like most modern poets Bate Besong prefers free verse...at the level of diction, Besong sometimes goes for the rare word, one that looks seemingly strange and seemingly unpronounceable and unAnglo-saxon. Yet more often than not the word is an English word. E.g. "djinn", "thong", "thaumaturge" "simurge" etc. Even in the most advanced dictionaries, a few of Besong's words cannot be located, in which case they may simply be words of his own coinage or borrowings from his local vernacular e.g. Mfam or obasinjom. Occasionally Bate Besong boldly brings into his poetry words from such diverse languages as Arabic, German, French or Kenyang etc in an attempt to express his idea precisely. He is a poet with elliptical poetic imagination; his poetry is often erratic in its movement. There is no rigid respect for chronology in the expression of his thought and ideas, nor an attempt to stick to a syntactic logic in the structure of his sentences. (<http://www.batebesong.com/2007/10/bate-besong-is-.html>)

If Bate Besong is sporadic in his style, he is consistent in his themes as he strives to champion the cause of freedom and justice for the common man.

In like manner, Dibussi Tande's *No Turning Back* also covers a broad thematic and geographical canvass although his launching pad is the socio-political reality of Cameroon which he sharply criticizes. In this collection, Tande forces us to turn back and look at the pivotal volcanic moments in Cameroon's history between 1990- 1993 characterized by a return to multi-party politics in Cameroon, and the renaissance of Anglophone Cameroon nationalism or "the Anglophone Cameroon question". As a student activist and budding journalist during this historic period, Tande eloquently captures cadences of these events in this collection of

poetry. The poems in this collection thus frame the individual in a historical sweep of events.

The collection is divided into three sections. The first section is titled *Visions*. Dibussi Tande has a vision of a more humane and peaceful Cameroon/Africa but that peace will definitely come at a price. For example, although in the poem, "Gathering Clouds", the clouds are followed by "lightening that "violently barks" and the speaker sees "fury in the horizon", one is also aware of the cleansing nature of a violent downpour. Like James Ene Henshaw's Fortune Teller puts it in his memorable play, *This is our Chance*, "A mighty wind shall blow, a great rain shall fall, much harm shall be done. But out of destruction there shall be calm' (14). This same duality is captured in the title poem of the collection, "No turning back". In this poem, the poet holds that "Stars shine brightest/when the day is darkest. In fact, Tande like Henshaw's Fortune Teller, concludes this poem with these words,

Tyranny shall glow
And blood will flow
But the dream shall live on
Until freedom is won. (4)

Moreover, a poem such as "Detention Blues" which captures the loss of freedom and torture from soldiers with "sadistic glee", still ends on an energetic note, "But our cause had been noble and right". In addition, another poem "Liberty city" captures this hopeful vision as the poet declares, "hold on freedom lover/Darkness would soon be over" (20). But Tande's vision for a better world stretches beyond Cameroon. "El Norte", "Black Power" and "Fading Dream" frame the United States as a place with paradoxes that may see Martin Luther King's dream fade away if the vision of "Medgar, Martin and Malcolm(continue to be) devoured". The second section of this collection of poems "Tribulations" is the vantage position from which the poet can be a visionary. The titles are very revealing. The titles range from "Plunderers", "Disillusion", "Betrayed", to "Democracy". With these titles one can easily piece together the story of Cameroon: The ruling president for 25 years and counting, Paul Biya has plundered the nation, the people feel betrayed, disillusion is rampant and "demoCRAZY" now reigns. However the third section titled "Songs of hope" brings the reader back to a vision of

hope. These poems return to Tande's main area of focus, Anglophone Cameroon. In the opening poem of the section, "Broken Dreams", he considers Anglophone Cameroonians in a francophone dominated Republic of Cameroon as:

A minority deprived of its dignity
And callously cheated of its property
The helpless victims of majority rule. (46)

According to Bate Besong, "the agony of the Anglophone Cameroon question is compounded by the endless uncertainty as to whether there would ever be an end to it". But it is precisely the end that Tande sees in the final poem of the collection, "We Shall Rise Again". This is Tande's apocalyptic vision for Anglophone Cameroon:

The mighty Fako mountain
And the crumbling Bismark fountain
Shall spit out freedom's fiery venom
That will end this shameful serfdom;
Our Nation shall be born again
And our freedom forever regained. (59)

This poem carries the image and vision of hope that dominates the collection. While the "crumbling Bismark fountain" acknowledges our crumbling colonial past, the image of "mighty Fako Mountain" underscores the potential of postcolonial realities. But what stands out here is that Tande sees the hybridity embedded in these two powerful images as the foundation of a new nation, a new nation where Anglophone Cameroonians would not be treated as "serfs" on their own land and our past will play a role in our present for a wholesome human existence.

However, besides the content, what makes this collection of poems truly memorable is the lucidity with which the poems are rendered. These poems exude the poet's youthful exuberance at the time that they were written. The poems are very accessible and despite Dibussi's admiration for the prolific playwright and poet, Bate Besong's "Soyinka style" of poetry, Tande instead fits into the poetic school of another prolific poet, Niyi Osundare. In an interview, Osundare explained that poems by poets of the generation before him like:

Soyinka, Okigbo, J.P Clark and Kofi Awoonor were extremely difficult, particularly those by Soyinka and Okigbo...When I started writing ...I felt it was the duty of the new generation of Nigerian (African) poets to bring poetry back to the people. (Presence Africaine, 97)

Deviating from the Cameroon socio-political landscape is Bertrand Fote's collection, *Floodgates: Emergency Room Life in Verse*. Fote, an emergency room physician practicing in the United States, plunges us into an exhilarating but sometimes excruciating excursion to the human body. There we become witnesses not only to human pain and suffering but also to the abundance of human compassion and empathy.

Yet Dr. Fote's oeuvre does not stand as an island. Medicine and poetry/literature have always had a relationship since time immemorial especially within the African context. Healing by traditional African doctors always went hand-in-hand with poetic incantation, underscoring the potency of words as healing weapons. The ancient Greeks also found more than entertainment in poetry/theater. The proximity of ancient Greece's theatres to its shrines for Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, suggests that the Greeks viewed drama as a healing process. In fact, catharsis, the primordial healing aspect of theater, was central to ancient Greek tragedies. Equally, great poets/writers like John Keats, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Oliver Goldsmith, William Carlos Williams and James Ene Henshaw were known doctors/surgeons in their day and poetry/creative writing afforded them an avenue to celebrate their humanity in a unique way.

Therefore, with his poetry, Dr Fote is not just engaged in a futile intellectual exercise for art's sake, but he enters another sacred place of healing. Here he engages with the illusive part of the human body—the soul. What one gets in this collection then, are not the super-skills of a medical doctor or the wonder of modern medicine but the revelation of what truly happens when a doctor becomes a witness to human suffering, pain and sometimes death.

Although drama on the other hand seems to be in decline, a few published plays have been visible: Joseph Bannavti's *The Reapers and Freed into jail* (2007), Langmia's *Titabet and the Takumbeng* (2008), Francis Nyamnjoh's *The Convert* (2007), and Lloney

Monono's *Beyond the Promise* (2006). *The Reapers* revolves around Asui and Maimo whose love and marriage is destroyed by vices in a volatile society where even teachers cannot be trusted with students put under their care. Yet what is wrong in this family saga is not the supposed infidelity of Asui or the anger of Maimo, rather it is the lack of logic and reason which frames their actions. It is this same lack of logic and reason which catapults the larger society to a morally bankrupt quagmire. The question which looms at the end of the play is not why it happened but how the mess can be cleaned up; this question extends to the larger society as well. It is this same question that Langmia seeks to answer in another context in his play *Titabet and the Takumbeng*.

Langmia's play starts in medias res with a narrator who, in a series of proverbs intimates that there's trouble in the land. Numvi, a member of the clan is dead as a result of police brutality and his people are angry. When the people gather over the body of Numvi in search of a solution they are confronted by the same brutal police force that is responsible for the death of numvi. Despite being brutalized by the military, Titabet emerges as a leader of the people willing to sacrifice his life for justice and freedom. He is incarcerated but thanks to the *Takumbeng*, a group of old menopausal women whose power resides in the sacredness of womanhood, Titabet and his people may find a solution to the political oppression, brutal rapes and economic upheaval which now threatens their existence. Based on actual events after the 1992 presidential elections in Cameroon, Langmia has celebrated in fiction, the role the *Takumbeng*, and women in general played to enhance the democratic process during this period of political and social unrest. A stage actor par excellence, Langmia has created dialogue that can easily translate to action on stage. The narrator opens the play with these lines: "Must darkness drive away daylight at noon?" Who is to blame? You tell me. Should I lick my vomit and then visit the toilet after?" (2) These utterances compel the audience to forge a kinship with the narrator and consequently the events that unfold on stage. It is the bond between the actors and the audience that the playwright manipulates to propose a solution. By the time the play gets to the end and the *Takumbeng* are collectively tip-toeing to the military barracks to free their leaders, the audience is in sync with them. What adds to the quality of this play is Langmia's prolific use of proverbs, songs and rhetorical

questions which not only serve as a cultural backdrop to this play but equally heighten the tension and foreground meaning at critical intervals in the play.

After briefly reviewing the literary output of the last fifty years by Anglophone Cameroonians, the age old debate about the paucity of Anglophone Cameroon literature must be laid to rest. Anglophone Cameroon does not lack writers but what may be lacking are channels to make these writers and their works more visible. Another observation apparent from this brief survey is that Anglophone Cameroon literature is in process. It is a literature in the making since the people it represents are still in the process of defining themselves, as they continue to determine their status within the nation-state, Republic of Cameroon. However, one can conclude that despite the postcolonial realities that stifle the growth of Anglophone Cameroon literature, it is thriving all the same, and since this literature illuminates another important section of our common humanity, it is worthy of serious examination by literary critics and the general public.

Conclusion

The vagaries of colonialism that resulted in the formation of nation-states in Africa have resulted in postcolonialism as a permanent site for resistance and reconstruction. The peculiar position of Anglophone Cameroon within the nation-state of Republic of Cameroon is unique. As Bate Besong explains, it is an irony “of the Cameroon situation that the British Southern Cameroons after achieving independence as the state of West Cameroon with an elected parliament, a lively opposition, a vibrant economy thus signifying for many the quintessence of the new Africa where freedom and equality would hold sway, came to unwittingly enmesh herself in the throes of a wholly assimilated neo-colonial French Cameroon” (“Ontogenesis” 1-2). Therefore postcoloniality for Anglophone Cameroonians bears the brunt of Western colonialism and what Emmanuel Doh has termed “horizontal colonialism” from Francophone Cameroon. This is the landscape of Anglophone Cameroon literature.

It is clear from this research that Anglophone literature is thriving and growing in number. However, publishing houses remain scarce and the few in existence are financially limited since publishing materials need to be imported. This has resulted in fewer literary texts published each year, despite the many manuscripts received by publishers. Taking into consideration the financial constraints faced by publishers, it is advisable for publishers to carry out joint ventures with other publishers. The success of the African Book Collective, founded by seventeen African publishers, shows that when publishers join resources they can overcome the financial difficulties. In addition, given the high cost of publishing, Anglophone Cameroon writers should be willing to share publishing costs with the publisher.

Nevertheless, once a book is published it is not only a cultural artifact; it is a commercial commodity that needs to be marketed aggressively. This research revealed that Anglophone Cameroon publishers do not treat books as commercial commodities. Before delving into publishing, a publisher must at least investigate his/her immediate market to determine the size of his audience. He also has to determine his distribution chain and work out in advance the publicity strategy for his commodity. The publisher must attempt

to determine where his potential readers are located and put the books within their reach. As Cyprian Ekwensi argues,

Chinweizu talks of decolonization of African literature, there should be a decolonization of African Publishing. Publishers for Africa must find their own style just as publishers for America have done. Our culture recognizes retailing as hawking. If that will be the final answer to making our people read more books, then books must be hawked (107).

The publisher also has to ensure that the book is financially within reach of his potential reader. For example, Maimo's *I Am Vindicated*, published by Kraus, could not sell in Cameroon because it cost 9000CFA, which was way beyond the purchasing power of potential readers. As a foreign publisher, Kraus neglected the home market, but an indigenous publisher has only himself to blame if he cannot sell his book in Cameroon because the cost is above the purchasing power of his audience. In terms of international distribution, the Internet is a good resource to explore. Publishers can create their own Web sites to promote their books and activities. Creating and maintaining a Web site is no longer very complicated, and the service is now offered for free on certain Web sites like <www.abchood.com>. In this way publishers could easily network with other publishers through Web site links.

To further increase dissemination of Anglophone literature, writers need to capitalize on statistics that show that Anglophone Cameroonians frequently read newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. Anglophone Cameroonian writers should also use these media to disseminate their works. Hopefully, with the creation of a national library and a literary archive, these ephemera can be preserved for posterity. The need for a national library remains urgent. A national library acquires and preserves the complete collection of material emanating from and relating to the country. It is also expected to carry a complete bibliographic record of material emanating from and relating to the country, both current and retrospective. However, since evidence from most national libraries shows that there is usually an overemphasis on preserving the political history of the country to the detriment of literary documents, the University of Buea should take up the duty of serving as a literary archive for Anglophone Cameroon literature. Comparing the holdings of U.S. libraries and the availability of

Anglophone literature in Cameroon points to the fact that in the future when a national library is created, there would be a dependence on U.S. libraries to obtain copies, especially of the works published in the first twenty years of independence. Also, without literary archives to preserve their manuscripts and a lack of knowledge on the importance of manuscripts to literary studies, most Anglophone Cameroon writers have not protected their manuscripts. The manuscripts are either missing or destroyed. Even the printers and publishers are not aware of the literary value of their proofs. Constructing an accurate edition of a text in the future would be fraught with difficulties, especially when one notices the number of mistakes in printing or differences in content from one printing to another. For example, Nalova Lyonga quotes the Blindman in Besong's *Beast of no Nation* as saying:

Agbada go

Trouble come ("Le Degre Zero" 160)

Lyonga gives the page number as 19 without a citation, although her general bibliography indicates that she used the first edition published by Nooremac in 1990. However, I have that same edition and it has the Blindman saying on the same page 19:

Agbada go

Crisis come

So how did this come about? Did the playwright change the word during another print run? "Trouble" and "crisis" both indicate problems, but each carries its own connotation. "Trouble" is more general in nature while "crisis" seems specific. One can rectify this discrepancy only with the playwright's original manuscript or publisher's proofs. Herein lies the need of a literary archive for future literary scholars. At present this may seem unimportant but in the future, without these manuscripts and other important documents concerning the lives of writers, it will be almost impossible to construct accurate editions of texts or literary biographies of authors. Moreover, those interested in issues concerning the process of creation or the impact of technology on oral literature like literacy would be disappointed. A tradition of written literature thrives on the preservation of written records as a foundation for new writing. Since this is an information age, there

is no excuse for inadequate documentation and preservation of Anglophone Cameroon literature.

Furthermore, contrary to what the average Anglophone Cameroonian thinks, this research proved that Anglophone Cameroonians read and want to read more of their own literature. The question of whether Africans read for pleasure, made international by Achebe's 1970 article "What do African Intellectuals Read?" in the *New York Times*, has been debated several times out of the context of Africa. Several studies (Kotei 1970; Griswold 2000) continue to explain that Africans do read and want to read more but that several factors limit the readership. These factors include the problems of language, high poverty levels, the communal nature of African societies vis-à-vis Western societies, and so on.

Most Africans, including Anglophone Cameroonians, are multilingual despite the presence of foreign official languages. A survey carried out on language use in Cameroon by Koenig, Chia, and Povey revealed that "ninety-eight percent of respondents in this survey agreed that for many purposes they regularly and primarily used their African first language with any associates who shared it." (12) This proves that "in the context of educational policy, [...] the neglected home languages play a far more consistent and dominant role across a wide spectrum of activities than had been allowed (Koenig, Chia and Povey, 12). Consequently, it should be borne in mind that reading in European languages in Africa will never be a widespread activity; it will remain the preserve of students, teachers, and a small number of the educated elite.

Thus there is need for indigenous languages to be brought back to the classrooms. If readers can read in their first language they will read more, even in English. Since indigenous languages are historically rooted carriers of culture, the languages would help future writers by opening them to a wealth of indigenous creative resources. English is therefore only useful as a vehicle of communication with the outside world and a rallying point of solidarity among Anglophone Cameroonians, but it cannot be the wellspring of literary creativity because its roots do not touch the cultural fibers of the writer. Writers need to tune in to their indigenous languages as a cultural source for Anglophone

Cameroon literature; otherwise Anglophone Cameroon literature will hit a dead end in the near future.

In Cameroon there is a move toward this direction spearheaded by Maurice Tadajeu, a Cameroonian researcher and linguist. While acknowledging the role of English and French as languages of wider communication nationally and internationally, Tadajeu insists that indigenous languages need to be added to the two official languages. He holds that “a Cameroon trilingual system should aim at helping each Cameroonian student become *fluent and literate*^{exvi} in his mother tongue or related provincial tongue [i.e., a “langue véhiculaire”] as well as the two official languages” (qtd. in Krieger 19). Under *Projet de Recherche Operationelle pour l’Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun* (PROPELCA), a few indigenous languages are being tested in nonstate schools as media of instruction to start primary education. As Krieger notes, “The curricular and testing structure is designed both to prove the efficacy of mother tongue education as the best preparation for European language competence and to anchor the mother tongue usage as a life long skill” (22). PROPELCA is making progress and it is hoped that the Cameroon government will move along PROPELCA’s lines in its language policy.

Nevertheless, for those ready to read in English, publishers have to use the means available at their disposal to publicize forthcoming titles. If potential readers do not know that a work is available, they cannot get it to read. Also, booksellers need to make an effort to captivate readers with creative displays of the books they carry and a pleasant sales manner. Furthermore, education is the mainstay of most literature; hence Anglophone Cameroon writers must continue to increase the number of Anglophone literary texts on the secondary and high school curriculum while university professors must increase the number of Anglophone literary texts taught in their African literature courses and Literature in English courses.

In addition, most readers out of school indicate an interest in popular literature, therefore Anglophone Cameroon writers have to write for this group of readers as well to balance the types of books available for reading. Although there is debate on whether lowbrow literature should be encouraged, studies in reading, even in Europe, show that ‘of those who read fiction, most read popular fiction: contemporary or historical romances, mysteries, and thrillers. The

readership for serious fiction is small indeed, no more than 10 percent of all adults” (Griswold 110). There is thus a need for variety in reading material. As Chinua Achebe proverbially puts it, “Let the kite perch and let the Eagle perch too” (19). Also, Anglophone Cameroon writers need to be encouraged and challenged by literary awards. It is with this in mind that I founded EduArt Inc which has instituted biennial awards for literature for the three genres poetry, prose and drama. The pioneer award ceremony took place on July 18, 2008 in Buea, Cameroon under the auspices of the award winning Nigerian poet, Niyi Osundare. These opportunities need to replicate so that Anglophone Cameroon literature can enter into dialogue with literature from other parts of the world to forge a better humanity.

An effective conclusion does not serve as closure, it serves as the foundation for new beginnings; hopefully these conclusions will initiate other beginnings for Anglophone Cameroon literature.

Endnotes

ⁱ A reference to the story of the Tower of Babel recorded in Genesis 11:1-8.

ⁱⁱ A small narrow loaf of French bread.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Biafrans (from Nigeria)”, “enemies in the house” and “traitors”.

^{iv} My italics for emphasis

^v Heinemann published Mbella Some Dipoko’s *A Few Nights and Days* in 1964 and *Because of Women* in 1968 while he was in France. Therefore, Jumbam was the first Anglophone Cameroonian residing in Cameroon to be published by Heinemann. It is also worthy to note that Dipoko is from the Moungo ethnic group whose members are predominantly found in the French -speaking Littoral province. Maybe that explains why Dipoko found himself in France at the time Anglophone Cameroonians were sent to England for further studies.

^{vi} Hereafter referred to as “*Beasts*”.

^{vii} When Yaounde breathes, Cameroon is alive. This statement was made when the civil disobedience in Cameroon in 1991 brought activities in all major cities to a halt except Yaounde. The President was insinuating that the “operation ghost towns” as they were called, had not crippled the nation, since Yaounde was not affected.

^{viii} This is a derogatory name used for “Francophones” in response to their use of the word “Anglos” as an insult to Anglophones.

^{ix} There are four soldiers named identified by their military ranks. First soldier (Commanding officer), Second Soldier (Captain and second in command), Third Soldier (Chief warrant officer) and Fourth soldier (sergent). The soldiers will be referred to as first, second, third and fourth respectively in this paper.

^x Translated “none dead”. After the Yaounde University strike of 1991, there were reports of student deaths and serious injuries. The government media led by the then Minister for communications, Augustine Kontchou Komeni declared that no student had died. The government later set up a commission of enquiry headed by the retired Chief Justice Endeley. The Endeley Commission repeated the Minister’s assertion that no students had died despite rumors that the government had erased the name of dead students on the university rosters to mask the truth.

^{xi} Soldiers suffer while their commander keeps all the money for himself.

^{xii} This is a psychological response sometimes seen in a hostage, in which the hostage develops loyalty to the hostage-taker, in spite of the danger (or at least risk) in which the hostage has been placed. In the situation under discussion, fourth soldier who has hitherto been on the side of the general by spending time with the other soldiers he becomes aware of the repressive regime of the General and decides to join the opposition forces to bring a true democratic change.

^{xiii} See Amaazee, V. "The 'Igbo scare' in British Cameroons, c.1945-1961". *Journal of African History* 31(1990), pp281-293.

^{xiv} I said it...they are Anglophones.

^{xv} Idiot, Look at you. We should have left you "Anglos" in Nigeria. We took pity on you and accepted you among us. Instead of being grateful, you are here causing us pain.

^{xvi} Emphasis is original.

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Appendix

Anglophone Cameroon Literature: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Primary Texts and Selected Criticism^{xvii}

It is now fifty years since Sankie Maimo launched Anglophone Cameroon Literature in Nigeria with the publication of his play *I am vindicated* while teaching drama at the May Flower Ikenne secondary school. As this book has shown, a lot of ink has flowed since then and this bibliography is additional proof. Most of the primary texts listed here have been identified in several US academic and public libraries. The top five university libraries with an impressive show of holdings on Anglophone Cameroon writings ranked in order of holdings are: Northwestern University library, Harvard University library, Indiana University library, Library of Congress, Washington DC and Columbia University library. Some of these works are also distributed in the US by African; Caribbean Imprints Library Services (AILS).

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Weblogs

Although the URL for weblogs and websites change frequently, I have nonetheless decided to include a sample of blog and websites that deal with Anglophone Cameroon literature as a resource for researchers and students, and also as a way of recording for posterity the fact that these blogs exist at this given time.

<http://anglocamlit.blogspot.com/>: An online portal of literary works from Anglophone Cameroon.

<http://www.eduartawards.org/>: The weblog for EduArt annual awards for literature written in English by Cameroonians and published in Cameroon or any African country. EduArt is a non profit organization promoting the arts.

<http://www.camart.org/>: Website of the Cameroon Northwest Association of Artists (CAMART). Includes profiles of writers, poets and playwrights from the Northwest province (one of the English-speaking provinces) of Cameroon.

<http://www.postnewslines.com/>: An interactive online feature of *The Post*, Cameroon's leading English language newspaper, which features book reviews, literary articles and poetry.

www.fonlon.org: The weblog celebrating the life and ideas of Dr. Bernard Nsokika Fonlon, the Cameroonian "Socrates".

<http://www.batebesong.com/>: The weblog of the late playwright and poet Bate Besong, featuring his poems, literary reviews, literary criticism, political commentary, etc.

<http://www.joyceash.com/>: Weblog of actress, screenwriter and literary critic, Dr. Joyce Ashuntantang featuring interviews with writers, literary reviews, literary criticism and her works of fiction.

<http://www.nyamnjoh.com/>: Weblog of novelist, playwright, journalist and teacher, Francis B. Nyamnjoh. It carries reviews of his works of fiction.

<http://www.dibussi.com/>: This weblog by Dibussi Tande which focuses primarily on socio-political issues and events in Cameroon frequently carries reviews and full length articles on Anglophone Cameroon history and literature.

<http://gahliagwangwaa.com/>: A website showcasing the poetry of Gahlia Gwangw'aa.

<http://www.dorothyatabong.com/pokaya.htm>: Website for Dorothy Atabong's novel, *Princess of Kaya*.

<http://www.lemonadestreet.net/>: Website for Bernice Angoh's poetry collection, *Lemonade Street*.

<http://cameroonpoetryalive.blogspot.com/>: Weblog showcasing the poetry of Bill Ndi.

<http://www.ilingosphere.com/>: Weblog showcasing the poems and short stories of Ilongo Fritz Ngale.

<http://www.nebafuh.com/>: The political commentary and poems of journalist and poet Neba Fuh.

<http://www.henrymokosso.com/>: Henry Mokosso introduces his published works of fiction and non-fiction on this website.

<http://www.martinjumbam.net/>: Writings about the foibles of Cameroonian society and politics by former Cameroon Life Magazine columnist, Martin Jumbam.

<http://www.simonmol.com/>: The poems and other writings of the late poet, playwright and journalist, Simon Mol.

<http://www.palapalamagazine.com/>: A Pan-African journal of culture, literature, and the politics of art, with an Anglophone Cameroonian flavor.

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“This text is a very useful supplement to Richard Bjornson’s *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity*, which concentrated primarily on literary texts from Francophone Cameroon. Dr. Ashuntantang, a skilled librarian, bibliographer and literary scholar, deals in depth with the environmental circumstances that have thwarted writers who have chosen to express themselves in English, but she shows how progress nevertheless has been made, particularly in recent years. This is the most comprehensive study of Anglophone Cameroon literature that has been published to date.”

- Bernth Lindfors, Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin.

“This study affirms the vibrancy of Anglophone Cameroon literature; it proves beyond reasonable doubt that there is a great deal of published work out there, and that its landscape is not only national but equally diasporic. This text is an important milestone in Anglophone scholarship. It should be a required text for scholars with an interest in Anglophone Cameroon/ African Literature.”

**- Shadrack Ambanasom, Prof. of African Literature,
E.N.S. Bambili/University of Yaounde I, Cameroon.**

This is a foundational text on the production and dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon literature. The Republic of Cameroon is a bilingual country with English and French as the official languages. Ashuntantang shows that the pattern of production and dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon literature is not only framed by the minority status of English and English-speaking Cameroonians within the Republic of Cameroon, but is also a reflection of a postcolonial reality in Africa where mostly African literary texts published by western multi-national corporations are assured wide international accessibility and readership. This book establishes that in spite of these setbacks, Anglophone Cameroon writers have produced a corpus of work that has enriched the genres of prose, poetry and drama, and that these texts deserve a wider readership.

Joyce B. Ashuntantang was born in Kumba Town, Cameroon. An Actress, screenwriter and filmmaker, she has studied in Cameroon, Great Britain and the USA. She earned a B.A in English from the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon, a Masters in Librarianship from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, U.K., and an M.phil/ Ph.D in English from the City University of New York, Graduate Center. She has been teaching English/African Literature at the University of Connecticut at Storrs/Greater Hartford, USA since 2003.



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